

COMMENDATIONS AND RECOGNITIONS
MARCH, 2018

Administration

Amy Pfender, Director of Student Support Services, has been selected to receive the 2018 University of Pittsburgh School of Education's Distinguished Departmental Alumni Award from the Department of Administrative and Policy Studies. She will be recognized at the School of Education's Alumni Reception on Friday, April 6, 2018, at the University Club on Pitt's campus in Oakland.

Middle School

Anoushka Sinha, an 8th grader at Ft. Couch, was the upper division monologue winner in the Pittsburgh Public Theater's 24th Annual Shakespeare Monologue & Scene Contest. The finalists' showcase was held recently at the O'Reilly Theater in the Downtown Cultural District. Anoushka performed a monologue as Helena in "All's Well That Ends Well." The youngest competitor in her division, she competed against seven other students in grades 10-12. Anoushka received a leather-bound volume of Shakespeare's complete works as well as a flex subscription to Pittsburgh Public Theater's next season.

Two Boyce Middle School teachers were recently honored with the Promising Practitioners Award from the Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education. English language arts teachers Amy Homer and Morgan Olsen were recognized on Monday, Feb. 26 at the PAMLE 2018 Conference in State College.

The Promising Practitioners Award is presented to teachers who are just beginning their middle school careers and have made a positive impact on both their school and community by incorporating effective middle level practices in their everyday teaching.

Ms. Homer and Mrs. Olsen were nominated for the award by Dan O'Rourke, Boyce Middle School principal, and Christine Mussomeli, Boyce Middle School assistant principal.

A Boyce Middle School student has been named a semifinalist in the 2018 Pennsylvania National Geographic State Bee. Sixth grader Louis Gargani scored among the top 100 on the qualifying exam that was administered to school-level champs throughout Pennsylvania. The 2018 Pennsylvania State Bee will be held on Friday, April 8, 2018, at The State Museum of Pennsylvania in Harrisburg.

High School

The Upper St. Clair High School Speech & Debate Team were the overall team tournament champions at the Bethel Park Black Hawk Invitational on Feb. 9-10, 2018, at Bethel Park middle and high schools.

Upper St. Clair placed first as a team in debate for the fifth consecutive year and third overall in speech.

The team also had a large number of individual achievements:

The Parliamentary debate team took all four semifinal and final places. The team of Vivek Babu, Sunny Chai and Jami Stout won the tournament championship. Third and fourth place belonged to the teams of Mathena Jencka, Amanda Ross and Anika Sinha as well as Basir Khan, Ayush Sharma and Chand Vadalía.

Members of the Lincoln-Douglas team, Abby Riemer advanced to the semifinals and Nadith Dharmasena made the quarterfinals, while Eshita Chhajlani made Partial Double-Octofinals.

In Public Forum, Christian Chiu and Harrison Chui were Partial Double-Octofinalists and Ariana Chiu and Ava White were Octofinalists.

In Congress, Daniel Speer placed fifth and John Joyce sixth while Alex Lampe and Caroline Wolfe were semifinalists.

In speech, the team of Wyatt Keating and Shebl Rosati won the tournament championship in Duo by seven ranks. Mayka Chaves took home second and Joe Phillips was fourth in Prose, the largest speech event. Paarth Shankar also placed sixth in Extemporaneous Speaking.

Semifinalists included Maddie Nolen (Prose), Laura Lapham (Humor), Grace Blumenfeld (Oratory), and Hashim Durrani (Drama). Quarterfinalists included Atharva Barve (Extemporaneous), Sammy Levy and Bryce Keating (Prose), and Ben Holthaus (Humor).

Ten Upper St. Clair High School seniors were recently named Finalists in the 2018 National Merit Scholarship Program. Steven D. Cheung, Ariana Chiu, Nadith A. Dharmasena, Sahil B. Doshi, Jagadeesh R. Gummadi, Michael R. Hrehocik, Caroline C. LeKachman, Spencer C. Miller, Daniel R. Speer and Abigail E. Wagner were selected on the basis of their SAT scores, grades, essays and letters of recommendation.

In September 2017, these students were named Semifinalists in the competition for scoring in the top one percent of all juniors completing the PSAT in October 2016.

Three High School students placed first in the annual High School Japanese Speech Contest on March 2, 2018, at the University of Pittsburgh. More than 100 high school Japanese language learners of all levels from the tri-state area compete in the regional speech and poster competition. Students participate in one of four speech levels according to their level of instruction. Madelyn Lebedda, Katie Knizner and Anna Culhane earned top honors in levels 1, 2 and 3. Finishing in the top three for each level were Ethan Quinto, second place in level 3; Caroline Knizner, third place in level 1; and Maggie Bryant, third place in level 2.

The Upper St. Clair Speech & Debate Team earned the opportunity to defend its state title for the eighth consecutive year, claiming the Pennsylvania High School Speech and Language District 3 Championship, held on February 24th at Moon Area High School.

Individual debate performances included a sweep of Public Forum debate by the teams of district champions Ariana Chiu, Ava White and Harshini Sakthivel. Parliamentary debate was also swept by district champions Amanda Ross, Anika Sinha, Mathena Jencka, Ethan Bowman, Steven Cheung and Jacob Lantzman. The district championship in Lincoln-Douglas debate went to undefeated district champion Spencer Miller while John Joyce qualified second in Senate. Daniel Speer represented the team in the House.

Equally successful speech performances were put in by Dramatic Interpretation competitors district champion Hashim Durrani and Mayka Chaves. Humorous Interpretation's Laura Lapham and Ben Holthaus will also represent the team at states. Charlize Goff qualified second in Prose and Richa Mahajan equaled that finish in Poetry. Commentary was swept by district champion Hridhay Reddy and Paarth Shankar. And, Krisha Monpara qualified in Persuasive while Neha Patel did the same in Informative.

There following first and second alternates placed third through fifth in their events: Abby Riemer in Lincoln-Douglas; Yash Jajoo and Devan Ekbote in Policy Debate; Alex Lampe in Senate; Anber Bhuiyan and Aya Dakroub in Duo; Sanjana Gandikota in Poetry; Loren White in Prose; Nadith Dharmasena and Atharva Barve in Extemporaneous; and Shanthi Krishnaswamy in Persuasive.

Upper St. Clair High School's Pantheon Choir has been selected to perform with the Pittsburgh Symphony during a showing of the movie "Home Alone" on Dec. 20, 2018, at Heinz Hall. Members of the Pittsburgh Symphony together with the Pantheon Choir will perform the Oscar-nominated score as the full-length movie is screened above the stage.

The following students placed high enough in auditions to move on to PMEA Region festivals:

SHS Region Choir 2018:

Isabela Couoh - Alto 1
Annabel McQuillan - Alto 2
Zoe Rankin - Alto 2
Jonah Glunt - Tenor 1
Logan Reynolds - Tenor 1
Connor Damon - Tenor 2
Tommy O'Brien - Tenor 2
Christian Jones - Bass 1
Jack Smith - Bass 2

SHS Region Band 2018:

James Boston - Trumpet
Shane Bowman - Percussion
Alexa Drechnik - Flute
Matthew Higgs - Percussion
Meghan Johnson – Clarinet
Holly Smith - Contra Bass Clarinet
Abbie Wagner - Flute

SHS Region Orchestra 2018:

James Boston – Trumpet

Congratulations are extended to the following Parkway West Career & Technology Center Director's list of Honor Students for the 2nd quarter of the 2017-2018 school year:

Gabrielle Caudill – Cosmetology
Lillian Caudill – Public Safety
Alex Gillespie – Public Safety
Lucas Gillespie – BCT
Darian Glassey – HVAC
Daniel Jaffee – ITE
Anna Perry – Digital Multimedia
Rebecca Swiech – Culinary Arts

Middle School/High School

Five writers and four artists recently earned recognition in the regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. Among the 13 awards were two Gold Key honors including eighth grader Alex LeKachman for his painting titled, "Autumn Trail" and sophomore Lauren Teresi for her photograph, "Into the Woods."

As Gold Key Award winners, Alex and Lauren have qualified to compete at the national level.

Four students earned a combined total of seven 2018 Northeast Art Region-at-Large Awards. Honorees include:

Sydney Kirk, grade 8, earned 3 Honorable Mentions in the category of Photography
Alex LeKachman, grade 8, earned a Gold Key in the category of Painting
Katherine Li, grade 9, earned Honorable Mention in the category of Painting
Lauren Teresi, grade 10, earned a Gold Key and Silver Key for 2 entries in the category of Photography

The following students earned recognition through the 2018 Pittsburgh Regional Scholastic Writing Awards:

Annika Chaves, grade 9, earned a Silver Key in the category of Poetry
Sarah Besser, grade 10, earned an Honorable Mention in the category of Personal Essay/Memoir
Markella Jahn, grade 7, earned a Silver Key in the category of Short Story
Himani Karia, grade 8, earned an Honorable Mention in the category of Personal Essay/Memoir
Julia Roeschenthaler, grade 8, earned an Honorable Mention and a Silver Key for two entries in the category of Poetry.

This year's writing contest drew more than 400 submissions from students in grades 7-12 throughout Allegheny County. Winners were recognized at an awards ceremony on Saturday, Feb. 24, 2018, at the Frick Fine Arts Center.

Congratulations are extended to high school sophomore, Gabriella Spina for earning the highest achievement in Girl Scouting, the Gold Award.

This award recognizes girls in grades 9 through 12 who demonstrate extraordinary leadership through sustainable and measurable Take Action projects that address important community needs.

Gabi's project, Taking Care of Your SELFie, offered a free one-day workshop for girls in grades 6, 7 and 8 to address and combat negative self-esteem. The workshop encouraged girls to focus on the positive aspects found within themselves and to utilize these in daily life.