



Seneca High School
IRISH HIGHLIGHTER
COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER
Fall 2017
Volume 7: Issue 1

The Board of Education Corner

Season's Greetings!

The newsletter theme this semester is "making an impact." Take a moment and think of one educator that made a positive impact in your life. It is the charge of the Seneca High School Board of Education that when asked that question five, ten, or even twenty years from now, our graduates will have a very hard time choosing just one.

It is not an exaggeration to say that a great teacher can change a student's life. Teacher's at Seneca High School connect with students and strive to reach them on multiple levels. Not only are they responsible for providing engaging lessons, they also inspire, motivate, and guide our youth on a daily basis. Whether in the classroom, on a sports field or on the stage, our students benefit from the commitment of our staff to provide a well-rounded education and a positive experience during their time at Seneca High School.

My role as a parent, community member and Board of Education President has given me the opportunity to witness this first hand. I am proud of the commitment of our Administrators, Faculty and Staff to strive each day to make a positive impact on the students who walk the halls of Seneca High School. On behalf of the Board of Education, I thank you for all you do.

Ron Frye
Board President

Seneca High School is pleased to present the results of the 2016-17 audited financial statements. With the change in the assessed value of Exelon, the largest taxpayer in the district, the levy percent increase from the previous year's extension will be more than 5%, resulting in a Truth in Taxation Hearing and notice in the paper. As part of the Exelon Agreement, the tax rate for Seneca High School is frozen at 1.79838. Even though the levy request is higher than 5%, please be assured that Seneca High School will abate to 1.79383, which is the exact same tax rate beginning with the 2012 tax levy through 2019 levy request as required by the agreement.

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

*Financial Recognition from State: Highest Rating 4.0

*Reached Goal of One Year Operating in Fund Balances

*Seven Year Exelon Agreement sets tax rate at 1.79838

Seneca High School is an abating district. The Tax Rate will remain the same for all taxpayers during the seven year agreement

2016-17 Audited Financial Statements

Operating Revenues

Real Estate Taxes	\$9,252,944.00
Local	\$1,087,476.00
State	\$214,254.00
Federal	\$245,771.00
General State Aid	\$171,326.00
Total	\$10,971,771.00

Operating Expenses

Salaries & Benefits	\$6,959,476.00
Purchased Services	\$931,694.00
Supplies	\$807,757.00
Capital	\$331,421.00
Other	\$371,038.00
Total	\$9,401,386.00

A message from SHS Superintendent, Dr. James Carlson

Quote: "A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives." Jackie Robinson

When I was a senior in high school, a classmate and I were selected to participate in a pilot program for our service-learning requirement at Elim Christian School, located in the south suburbs, for students with significant disabilities. Assisting students with physical, mental, and multiple disabilities made a profound impact, but perhaps not as much on those of whom you may be thinking. My classmate and I were certainly providing much needed support; but as I quickly learned, it was these very special children making the impact, and they were making it on us.

Now my parents were unbelievable givers, and, therefore, terrific models for me when I was growing up. I saw daily how one makes an impact. My experience at Elim Christian School, however, showed me that it truly is "in giving that we receive." This truth is certainly not lost on the students and staff at Seneca High School. Making an impact seems to be part of their DNA. Take, for instance, the work of the SHS National Honor Society, which hosted a food drive and raised nearly \$1,300 for Puerto Rico Hurricane Relief.

In the pages to come, you will read about the work of Mr. Terry Maxwell and the Seneca High School Chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and their fine work assisting those in need. You will also learn about a remarkable SHS junior, Marissa Holmes, who is making an impact with her work to support children around the world. These are but a few of the efforts made by students and staff to make an impact.

SHS Senior Dylan Leasure knows much about making an impact. In 2016, Dylan was a recipient of a "wish" by Make-A-Wish Illinois to go to the Pro Bowl in Hawaii and meet Ray Lewis. Make-A-Wish grants wishes for children with life-threatening medical conditions to enrich their lives with hope. Just last year, Dylan organized a team to raise funds so that others may have wishes granted. He was recently presented a plaque at a school pep rally for his efforts.

This year, Dylan is organizing the Insane Irish, a Seneca High School team, to participate in a friendly competition with other area schools to raise funds for Make-A-Wish Illinois. Known as the Penguin Plunge, the competition will be held on Saturday, January 6, 2018, at Heritage Harbor in Ottawa. The Insane Irish team, captained by Dylan, needs support for their efforts. Anyone interested in joining the Insane Irish team or providing a donation can visit [make a wish website http://site.wish.org/goto/insaneirish18](http://site.wish.org/goto/insaneirish18). As with all of the wonderful efforts by our students and staff, it is in the act of making an impact that we are truly empowered.

Finally, on behalf of the entire Seneca High School Learning Community, I wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and safe and prosperous New Year.

Semester Highlights from SHS Principal, Marty Voiles

Quote: "One person can make a difference, and everyone should try." ~ John F. Kennedy

At the conclusion of the 2017-2018 school year, Seneca High School will be saying goodbye to four teachers who will be retiring after a combined total of 114 years of service in the field of education; 106 of those years being spent, in the Seneca Township High School district. Below is a brief snippet summarizing each teacher's tenure, along with a few parting words of wisdom for anyone entering the profession.

Ms. Karen Raney is a 1983 graduate of Northern Illinois University. The 2017-2018 school year marks her 33rd year of teaching. Ms. Raney has spent two years teaching and coaching at Elgin St. Edward High School (1985-1987) and thirty-one years at Seneca High School. Ms. Raney earned her M.A. degree from Aurora University in 1998.

Ms. Raney coached volleyball at Seneca Grade School for seven years, was the Head Varsity Girls Softball Coach at SHS for six years and has been Head Volleyball Coach for thirty-three years, serving thirty-one of those at SHS. When asked to provide professional advice to new teacher's entering the profession, Ms. Raney said, "Excel at your job!! Improve your teaching skills every year of your career. Most of all, be you!"

Mr. Bonner is a 1984 graduate of Northern Illinois University. This school year marks his 33rd year of teaching. Mr. Bonner's teaching positions include spending (1) year at Serena Jr. High School, two years at Shabbona High School and thirty years at Seneca High School. Mr. Bonner has spent his entire teaching career as a Special Education teacher primarily assisting students in the self-contained classroom providing various academic supports for regular education students.

Mr. Wes Bonner coached two years of basketball, three years of football, eleven years of volleyball and twenty-five years of junior and senior high track. Mr. Bonner's professional advice for new teachers entering the field today is, "Show respect. If you show respect, you get respect. No rules needed."

Mr. Jeff Stenzel is a graduate of Joliet Junior College, the University of St. Francis (B. S.) and the University of Aurora (M. A.) This school year marks Mr. Stenzel's 25th year of teaching. Mr. Stenzel has spent one year working in the Wilmington School District, two years at Milton Pope School District, and twenty-two years at Seneca High School. Mr. Stenzel has taught various English courses in his time at Seneca High School.

Mr. Stenzel has also coached a variety of sports, including boys and girls basketball for a combined twenty-four years, baseball for five years, girls softball for one year, golf for ten years, and has been the Freshmen Class Sponsor for eight years. Mr. Stenzel advises, "You will learn all kinds of new ideologies and theories in education. Do not get caught up more in the ideologies of education and forget the importance of treating each student in your classroom as an individual."

Mrs. Fran Ogden is a 1980 graduate of the University of Illinois-Chicago. She received her M.S. degree in 1997. This school year is Mrs. Ogden's 23rd year in education, all of which have been at Seneca High School. An interesting fact about Mrs. Ogden is that she completed her student teaching at SHS and was subsequently hired for full-time work beginning in the fall of 1995.

Mrs. Ogden has coached the SHS Scholastic Bowl team for fifteen years and the WYSE (World Youth Science and Engineering) team for three years. She has been an advisor of Science Club for eight years, an FFA advisor for five years, and a class advisor for three years. Mrs. Ogden provided the following advice for future teachers entering the field, "Be willing to ask for and accept help. Communication is crucial – with your students, parents and peers. Finally, take time for some relaxation – don't burn yourself out."

After reading some of the articles in this issue of our district newsletter, it is easy to understand that our theme for this edition is making an impact. These four educators are being recognized for their outstanding effort over time and because they made an impact on so many students, parents, and community members throughout their respective careers. On behalf of our students and staff at Seneca High School, the Board of Education and administration, we wish Karen Raney, Wes Bonner, Jeff Stenzel, and Fran Ogden a well-deserved happy and healthy retirement, full of new and successful adventures.

From the desk of Assistant Principal, Mike Coughlin

Quote: "Be more concerned with your character than your reputation."~ John Wooden

The small school environment, along with a caring staff that encourage Students to make good decisions both in and outside of the classroom, makes a positive impact on students.

As the physical and social "home away from home," schools naturally assume a primary role in substance abuse education, prevention, and early identification. Schools have the opportunity to work with parents, health care professionals, and community officials to identify students who show behavioral risks for drug-related problems.

Seneca High School takes its role in providing substance abuse education very seriously. Various activities are held throughout the year to demonstrate the importance of making healthy and smart decisions in life so that dreams and goals can be achieved. For example, we have retained various speakers to address our students on the importance of making good choices. During October, we participate in Red Ribbon Week, the nation's oldest and largest drug prevention program. Likewise, Mr. Jackson and Mrs. Paddock have done an excellent job with TRUST (Teens Resisting Unhealthy Social Temptations) every school year.

Studies show that students who are involved in school activities are less likely to use illegal substances. Seneca High School believes student involvement makes a positive impact in the lives of our students. The wide range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities offered at Seneca High School is a result of this belief. Last year, 87 percent of all students were involved in at least one activity. We believe this high participation rate is part of the prevention piece of the equation.

To further identify the scope of substance abuse in Illinois, Seneca High School will be participating in the Illinois Youth Survey in the next school semester. The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) has funded the administration of the Illinois Youth Survey since 1993. The survey is designed to gather information about a variety of health and social indicators, including substance use patterns and attitudes of Illinois youth. The information gathered during this survey will be used to identify future educational needs and programs. We anticipate both our Sophomore and Senior classes participating in this survey at the end of January. Please visit this website, [survey site https://iys.cprd.illinois.edu](https://iys.cprd.illinois.edu), for additional information. We will be sending out more details closer to the January dates.

Land of the Irish Sports News from Athletic Director, Steve Haines

Now that we have closed on the Fall athletic season, it is time to reflect on some outstanding performances and look forward to some great events that are forthcoming. In the athletic arena, the following list of Fighting Irish made an *impact* this fall and were named to the All Interstate 8 Conference in their respective sports:

**Wyatt Baldauf – Cross Country; McKenna Coffey – Golf; Faith Hacker – Golf; Logan Vandenberg – Football
Logan Bruss – Football; Christopher Collet – Cross Country; Ben Krause – Cross Country; Amber Vroman – Cross
Country; Taylor Vroman - Golf; Shane Cameron – Soccer; Lexi Greve – Volleyball; Brody McNabb – Golf; Brett Yegge
– Golf**

*Congratulations to the Boys and Girls Cross Country Teams as they were Sectional qualifiers. Individually, the Boys Cross Country team qualified for the IHSA Class A State meet in Peoria on November 4th. Congratulations to Christopher Collet who individually placed 10th in the state and earned All-State honors.

*Our Newark-Seneca Soccer coop team played the first 2 soccer games ever at SHS, which resulted in big wins for the team.

*Golfers, Brody McNabb and Taylor Vroman qualified for Sectionals this season.

*The Varsity Volleyball team finished 2nd at the Mendota Invite, and the JV Volleyball team won the Sandwich Invite in Conference.

*In a season plagued with injuries, the Fighting Irish Football team won three games, with none more remarkable than the season opener. In back to back years, the Irish have prevailed over Dwight on the final play. Last year the defensive team came up with the exciting win, and this year it was a long shot play by the offensive crew. In a last second Hail Mary pass from QB Ken Sangston, receiver Logan Bruss came down with a tipped ball for the game-winning touchdown.

Our Winter sports and extracurricular events are off to a great start to their seasons. The Lady Irish Basketball, Fighting Irish Basketball, and Fighting Irish Wrestling teams all have winning records thus far. A lot of hard work by the athletes and coaches have allowed the teams to be successful, and, with some Irish luck on our side, this will continue throughout the season.

*During November and December at Seneca High School, we hosted several exciting events. First, we hosted a 12-team sophomore girls' basketball tournament from November 13-18, and our Lady Irish came away with 2nd place.

*From November 20th to the 25th, SHS hosted the annual Seneca Thanksgiving Boys Basketball Tournaments. Irish varsity finished in 3rd place, and the sophomore players finished 3rd in their tournament as well.

*The Land of the Irish was host to 11 schools that participated in the Seneca Irish Wrestling Invitational on Saturday, December 2nd. Coach Todd Yegge does a great job of putting together a top-notch tournament. Congratulations are in order for the Irish Wrestling Squad, as they came away with 2nd place in this event.

*The months of October and November are also when many of our clubs and extracurricular organizations begin their practices and meets. The Speech Team began its season on Saturday, December 9th, with the Seneca Speech Invitational. This is a day-long event in which Coaches Marilee Applebee, Jennifer Doloski, and Zach Applebee put in a lot of work to make this a highlight for the teams that attend. The SHS Speech Team placed fifth overall.

*The Scholastic Bowl Team has already opened its season and has several team wins as a result. The FFA enjoyed its time attending the FFA National Convention during the last week in October.

If you get a chance, please come out and support these students, as there are several home events and games after the New Year. All of these organizations and sporting teams continue to make an *impact* here in the halls of Seneca High School and make me proud to say that we are the *Irish*!

Notes from our School Psychologist, Jill Rockrhor

Quote: "You may find that making a difference for others makes the biggest difference in you." ~ Brian Williams

As we focus on the importance of making an impact, I would like to approach this topic from a different perspective. We all know that when we focus our time and resources on helping others, we are providing a positive benefit to those we are helping. However, there is also a growing body of research that suggests that helping others has a positive psychological impact on the helper as well. In particular, teens are greatly impacted by volunteering and becoming involved in the community. In fact, research indicates that service to others affects behavior, development, self-image, future outcomes, and even physical health.

Studies have shown that teens who volunteer at least one hour per week are 50% less likely to abuse alcohol and drugs. Students who volunteer typically perform better academically and are more likely to graduate, avoid teen pregnancy, and vote as adults. Community service increases an adolescent's sense of belonging, purpose, and self-worth. Service to others during adolescence has been linked to better leadership skills such as problem-solving and decision-making skills. Studies show that adults who volunteered during their teen years have a stronger work ethic and are three times more likely to volunteer as adults than their peers who have not.

There are health benefits as well. In the short term, helping others causes a "helper's high" – feelings of empathy toward others lower our own stress response and strengthen our immunity. Research on the long-term effects of service to others supports a decrease in depression and an increase in life expectancy for those who regularly volunteer. Many teens may want to become involved but may not know how to start. Here are some tips on how to help your student get started:

- **Talk to your child about volunteering and consider volunteering together.**
- **Look for service opportunities that are in line with your child's interests. Opportunities abound in school, through friends, and even online. One avenue may be to partner with local hospitals or community centers, while others may find it a better fit to raise funds or gather supplies.**
- **Help your child stay committed to the service activity he or she chooses. Stress the importance of responsibility and follow-through.**
- **Follow-up with your child following a service activity to talk about what they enjoyed, what they might do differently, and how it made them feel.**

Student Achievements

Congratulations to the following Seneca High School seniors for being named Illinois State Scholars:

Lane Weber, Kholton Kovall, Hunter Flynn, Tyson Elias, Taylor Vroman, Paige Hepner, Evelyn Odum, Faith Thrun, Mya Trager, Sara Cahill

The Illinois Student Assistance Commission selects Illinois State Scholars based on class rank and ACT scores.

The Illinois State Scholar program is an honorary recognition without any monetary award.

Seneca High School Students Attend I-8 Leadership Conference 2017

The Interstate Eight Leadership Conference was held on Monday, October 23rd at Morris Country Club. Ted Wiese was the keynote speaker who presented a Dynamic Leadership & Team Building Program. The students worked in small groups to discuss and share leadership topics with the other school representatives. The students who represented Seneca High School are: Dylan Bryant, Jacob Brown, Anna Misener, Mark Mehochko, Levi Maierhofer, Monica Groth, Claire Woods, and Eve Odum

2017 DAR Good Citizen Award Recipient

Miss Sara Cahill was recently honored with the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Good Citizen Award for Seneca High School. She is the daughter of Amy and Tim Cahill of Kinsman.

The Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizen Award honors an outstanding senior who exhibits the qualities of dependability, leadership, service and patriotism. The DAR selection was voted on by the faculty and staff.

Sara is an excellent student, and is extremely involved at Seneca High School and in the community. She is a member of the Speech Team, Art Club, GSA, Student Ambassadors, Young Philanthropy Group, Spanish Club, and Teens Resisting Unhealthy Social Temptations (TRUST). She is on the Volleyball Team, Basketball Team, Track Team, and was initiated into the National Honor Society serving as the NHS Vice-President.

Being the recipient of the DAR Good Citizen Award, Sara has completed an essay that will have the opportunity to advance through state and national levels of judging. The DAR Good Citizens program and scholarship contest is sponsored by the Illini Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Congratulations Sara!

2018 HOBY Leadership Seminar

Monica Groth, Anna Roseland, and Trevor Till, all Seneca High School sophomores, have been selected to represent Seneca Township High School at the 2018 HOBY Leadership Seminar.

The Leadership Seminar is designed for high school sophomores to recognize their leadership talents and apply them in becoming effective, ethical leaders in their homes, schools, workplaces, and community.

The students will participate in hands-on leadership activities and meet state leaders in such areas as business, government, education, media and the non-profit sector.

Each September, every accredited public, private and charter high school in the country is invited to select and register outstanding sophomores as representatives to their local state seminar. Currently, nearly 9,000 sophomores, representing as many high schools nationwide, attend HOBY Leadership Seminars annually.

Monica Groth is the daughter of Steve and Jennifer Groth of Seneca. Anna Roseland is the daughter of Bill and Andrea Roseland of Marseilles and Trevor Till is the Son of Bob Till of Seneca and Lisa Moore of Mazon. All Seneca High School sophomore students were invited to pick up applications and submit essays for the opportunity to attend this seminar. Congratulations to Monica, Anna, and Trevor on their accomplishment.

Students of the Month

August 2017

Student of the Month - Sara Cahill

Role Model of the Month - Lyda Robinson

Most Improved Student of the Month - Olivia Schubert

Rookie of the Month - Levi Maierhofer

September 2017

Student of the Month - Eve Odum

Role Model of the Month - Colt Aldrich

Most Improved Student of the Month - Zoriah Martinez

Rookie of the Month - Claire Woods

October 2017

Student of the Month - Taylor Vroman

Role Model - Karsyn Schrag

Most Improved - Cody Altman

Rookie - Addison Olson

November 2017

Student of the Month – Taylor Bushman

Role Model of the Month – Rain Sanburg

Most Improved Student of the Month – Joshua Durbon

Rookie of the Month – Nathan Johnson

Irish Highlights

Veteran's Day Assembly Held

Someone who has certainly made an impact is former SHS graduate Major Jason Baker with the United States Air Force. Major Baker was the guest speaker at our school's Veterans Day Assembly on November 10, 2017. Baker was already interested in joining the military before he graduated high school, but after the 911 attacks on the US, he knew for sure that he wanted to enlist. After graduating SHS in 2002, he went immediately into the ROTC program at the University of Illinois, where he graduated and became an officer. Earning his title as a major in the Air Force, Baker has flown over 1200 hours, with over half of those hours occurring during combat. Major Baker has a high level, high stress duty as he directs Command, Control & Intelligence to air support and ground forces below. He has been deployed several times to Afghanistan and Libya, as well as serving in combat missions against ISIS. Currently, one of Major Baker's tasks is to instruct new aircrew members to prepare them to be combat ready.

As he addressed the student body, staff, and all in attendance, Major Baker made it clear that we all need to take the time to not only thank our enlisted and retired military men and women each year on Veterans Day but also to take the time to listen to them as well: "Talk to them. Ask them questions...and then take the time to really listen to their stories. We need to use each Veterans Day to re-focus our commitment to honoring veterans' service."

Major Baker also wanted to stress that "Veterans are represented by every corner of America, and every walk of life. We are men and women from every race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, political leaning, and socio-economic background. While representing just 7% of the country's population, we are clearly the most diverse group of people in the nation. And BECAUSE of this, and not in spite of it, we are the best at what we do." He told the crowd that through diversity and unity our military has what it takes to make our county a safer place to live. Major Baker spoke from his heart to an intently listening audience, as he reminded us of the impact that veterans make each and every day!

The assembly was brought to a close with the annual tribute of the Armed Forces on Parade by the SHS Chorus and Band. FFA members read aloud poems honoring our veterans and then called out the names of SHS alumni who are serving in our armed forces. Katie Lawrence and Ryann Kenney performed Taps, and lastly, the American Legion Vets retired the colors. A big thanks to all of the veterans who attended and to everyone who participated in the ceremony.

Impacting the Community

SHS Science teacher, Terry Maxwell, who is the club advisor for the **Seneca High School Fellowship of Christian Athletes Group** (FCA), reports that the group has participated in valuable and needed service work during the Fall semester of 2017. The FCA kicked off the school year by assembling a group of over thirty students to volunteer at the **Feed My Starving Children** facilities in Aurora, IL on September 16th. Feed My Starving Children is a program that boxes and distributes food to seventy underdeveloped and impoverished nations such as Ghana and Haiti. The SHS FCA members served for two hours filling and sealing bags of food called "ManaPacks". Volunteers from all over the Chicagoland area serve at the Feed My Starving Children facilities. On the night of September 16th, the SHS FCA served along with 200 other volunteers at the Aurora Feed My Starving Children location. That night over 60,000 meals were packed in boxes to be shipped out to people in need!

The SHS FCA also helped feed the hungry locally with its **Second Annual Trick or SOUP event**. Trick or SOUP is an event in which FCA members walk around town and collect food that the people of Seneca graciously donate. Following the food drive, the donations are taken to the **Seneca Food Pantry** located at the **First United Methodist Church**. The SHS FCA collected about 1500 pounds of food from the members of the community. The Seneca Food Pantry was very appreciative of the help provided through this FCA project. Thank you to all of the community donations, the FCA student members, and to the adult volunteers that helped to **make an impact** in feeding those in need. We hope to continue to serve and volunteer in the local community and beyond throughout the rest of the year. A special thanks to the adult chaperones who gave their time and service as well: SHS teachers Fran Ogden, Eric Vroman, and Dan Baker; Seneca High Board Member Cory Yandell and his family; SHS Athletic Trainer Chris Jackson and family; Seneca Grade School Teacher Tim Brungard, and the Maxwell family.

Feed My Starving Children Participants

Carter Feine; Amber Vroman; Ricky Milliman; Rachel Milliman; AJ Stiegler; Delaney Welsh; Ella Robson; Madi Jones; Paige Baker; Brooke Roseland; Kloey Lind; Lilly Saager; Brooklyn Giertz; Jillian Grief; Hannah Bilyeau; Spencer Degraff; Noah Petty; Chase Hauch; Trey Hauch; Levi Maierhofer; Brayden Roe; Kyra Jenkins; Silas Odum; AJ Baker; Maggie Cade; Hayley Wilson; Taylor Vroman; Eve Odum; Kholton Kovall; Hunter Howe. **Adult Volunteers:** Fran Ogden; Terry & Hannah Maxwell; Chris & Alaina Jackson; Cory & Susanne Yandell.

FCA Participates in TRICK OR SOUP Food Drive: Hunter Greve, Connor Greve, Ian Wilkinson, Hunter Howe, Amber Vroman, Taylor Vroman, Monica Groth, Isaac Brockman, Carter Feiner, Ella Robson, Delany Welsh, Brooklyn Giertz, Brooke Roseland, Paige Baker, Hannah Bilyeau, Kloey Lind, Alanna Chapman, and Rebekah Chapman. **Adult volunteers:** Cory Yandell & family, Eric Vroman, Dan Baker, Terry Maxwell & family, and Tim Brungard

SHS Art Teachers Make An Impact

Former SHS Class of 2011 Graduate Johanna (Hanna) Wyss is living out her dream of being a professional baker and artist. Hanna was selected to be a contestant on the Nationally televised HGTVs HALLOWEEN WARS, which aired this past Fall of 2017. She was part of a three-person team named "The Sugar Slashers." Johanna's team survived being eliminated from the first two rounds, but in a close call, was then let go after the third airing of the show. Her creativity began when she was young, and she credits her former SHS art teachers for *making an impact*. Wyss has been recognized for her artistic talents prior to the taping of Halloween Wars on HGTV. She was selected to make a Freddy Krueger cake and had the opportunity to present it to actor Robert Englund, who played the Freddy Krueger character in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* films. She also made a special cake for legendary rocker, Alice Cooper, while he was hosting a public viewing of the 1992 film *Wayne's World* in Chicago. Wyss currently resides and works in the Orland Park area. You can view her works and reach her via the following links: [cake website http://www.getbatty.com/](http://www.getbatty.com/) and [Johanna's facebook https://www.facebook.com/battycakesstudio/](https://www.facebook.com/battycakesstudio/)

Q & A with cake artist Miss Johanna Wyss:

Q: How did you become part of the Team Sugar Slashers?

A: About a year ago, Food Network called and asked if I would be interested in competing on Halloween Wars. Some of people I look up to most in the cake industry, such as cake artist Karen Portaleo and the late Vinny Garcia, of the now defunct Bleeding Heart Bakery, had won on the show in past seasons, so that was encouraging. I did not happen to have anything better going on the week they were filming, so I figured I would go along for the ride and see what happened. It was that simple!

Q: What were some of the highlights and difficulties (if any) during the Halloween Wars competition?

A: The show was one of the hardest things I have ever done. That clock you see ticking during competitions is totally real; you don't have any time to work with, and you have producers supervising your every move and stirring things up! It is not the place where you do your proudest or cleanest work, but it is quite an experience.

Q: What about other events that you have participated in recently?

A: I have competed in professional cake decorating competitions around the country, such as Pastry Live in Georgia and That Takes the Cake in Texas. To be honest I much prefer those to the televised competitions; they have much less drama and are more focused on actual technique.

Q: (Re: Alice Cooper & Robert Englund) What was it like to meet someone so famous? Have you met any other famous people?

A: Both Alice and Robert were total class acts, friendly, charming, and totally witty in person. It is always both a relief and delight when you meet famous people and they are actually great in real life-that is not always the case. I have also been lucky enough to get to meet and work with pastry chefs and cake decorators who are not household names but who are huge celebrities to me. That means a lot.

Q: How did this love of baking and art get started?

A: I do not remember a time when baking and art were not the center of my universe...I am just programmed this way!

Q: Do you credit any of your success to art classes taken at Seneca High?

A: Growing up in a small town, art class was a huge source of refuge. I somehow convinced administration that I needed double art my senior year and having that time and space designated for creation was so important to me. The support of Mr. Decker and Mr. Applebee still mean a lot to me to this day. They let me make some pretty strange and macabre art and always trusted and encouraged me, even when other people did not. I still can hear Mr. Applebee urging me not to throw art projects out every time I am tempted to do so! I have to give a shout out to Mrs. Read for learning along with me about how FCCLA competitions work. I hope people take advantage of the opportunities available there!

Q: Education or training after High School?

A: Attending Joliet Junior College's culinary arts program was one of the best decisions I have ever made. Initially I went because the college was accessible and affordable, but I soon realized that I had tapped into a wealth of resources and experiences that I am confident rival any of the "top" culinary schools in the country! I will never understand why people knock community college.

Q: What will you be tackling next?

A: While I do not think I will be seeking out any more televised competitions any time soon, I will continue to enter as many industry competitions as time allows. I am also always seeking out ways to travel and learn about pastry craft abroad, so I will probably be snooping around for more opportunities like that!

Caps for a Cause

Every year, the Seneca High-School FFA students put together SAE Projects to benefit the local community. This year, sophomore student Isiah Swon has a hefty goal for the Village of Seneca. Isiah has been confined to a wheelchair for many years of his life. Dealing with the day-to-day difficulties of being wheelchair-bound is a challenge beyond most of our comprehension. Isiah wishes to give back to his community, and make life a little easier for other wheelchair-bound residents of Seneca.

Swon has started, for his SAE project this year, the "Park Your Caps" project. Issuing a community-wide campaign of cap collection, the FFA with the lead of Swon has placed large yellow and red buckets provided by Schaeffer Oil Co. in strategic locations throughout the Seneca Area. Once the hefty goal of 500,000 caps (1,000 lbs) is collected, they will go towards the provision of a wheelchair-accessible picnic table from Green Tree Plastics. "Our goal is to get the public to be more concerned about the environment while acquiring a table the everyone in the community can use," said Swon in a news release.

"Park Your Caps" also requires funding to pay for the production of the picnic table. With a set goal of \$1,100.00 for an ADA Accessible Picnic Table. Any wishing to donate can do so by sending their donation to "Seneca FFA," 307 E. Scott Street, Seneca, IL, 61360 with the labeling "**Park Your Caps**".

Student Makes an Impact on a Teacher

From One Packer Fan To Another...Christmas just may have come a little early this year for SHS student, Isaiah Swon. One of his favorite topics of discussion is anything that deals with the famous Green Bay Packers football team. So when SHS History teacher, Don Brown, started to get to know his fellow "Cheesehead" fan wheeling around the halls of SHS, he knew that he wanted to do a little something special for Isaiah, and here is what he had to say:

I've never had Isaiah as a student in class, but obviously one of the first things I noticed about him was that he would often wear Packer gear to school. Well, of course, that is going to earn him high marks in my book right off the bat. Ever since his freshmen year, we would often banter in the halls about the games, scores, injuries, etc. Isaiah always had something positive to say. But, beyond that, and much more important, I have always been impressed with Isaiah's attitude and general outlook on life. Last spring, I was very impressed with his work ethic and drive, as he worked to compete in the IHSA wheelchair event in Track and Field. I would sometimes pass Isaiah on my drive to school in the mornings and seeing him wheeling himself to school made a huge impact on me.

This school year also showed Isaiah's drive as he started the collection efforts to raise money to construct handicap accessible picnic tables for the city parks. He took it upon himself to start the drive here at Seneca High School. Isaiah made a presentation about his cap drive fundraiser to the Seneca Village Board, as well. To be in his situation and to take those actions upon himself was just so impressive to me. I thought that Isaiah deserved some recognition for his huge efforts. I knew just the gift that would make him smile. What Packer fan wouldn't love to own an authentic Green Bay Packer football jersey?

I wanted the presentation to be a total surprise to Isaiah, so I knew I would need some help. I first approached our S.T.A.R.T. aides, Jodi Walsh and Kirsten Castelli, and, thankfully, they were both agreed and were excited to help. I would also like to acknowledge fellow teacher Dan Baker for his role as well. He helps take Isaiah around the building during homeroom, and he was also instrumental in keeping the gift a surprise. When I finally got to present the gift, seeing the look on Isaiah's face when he received the jersey made it all worthwhile. It was something I knew he would appreciate, and he was so thankful for it. Isaiah is just an outstanding young man who has faced difficult circumstances, yet he continues to be a strong role model for other students here at Seneca High School. I think many of us sometime forget how fortunate we really are to have the things we do. Isaiah reaffirmed to me how blessed I have been in my own life to be able to do something I truly enjoy. I hope to see Isaiah wear the Packer jersey proudly over the next few years. He deserves it!