



# The Irish Highlighter

Volume 10: Issue 1

## Seneca High School

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### COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

Fall 2020

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# THE IRISH HIGHLIGHTER

## Board of Education Corner

### The Show Must Go On!

A quick Internet search of this phrase suggests it originated in the 1800s and was used by the ringmaster when something unexpected occurred during a circus. Over time, it made its way out of the three rings into mainstream culture where it is now commonly used when something has gone wrong in a particular task or event.

So it is with the work of the Seneca High School Board of Education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Like all involved in the schooling process, we had to adapt our manner of conducting business to the new and unexpected restrictions placed upon us. But how was this to happen? The uncertainty was significant, and the questions were numerous. What kind of programs will we offer our students? Are we able to meet the needs of all our students? What about school meals? Will we be able to hold graduation? Do we have contractual issues that we need to address? Can we conduct our meetings safely? Where would we meet? Do we have the technology to allow for changes in our meetings? How can we allow for public participation? Will we be able to manage all our work? What about committee meetings? These are but a few of the issues we faced.

Despite all these questions, the show did go on, and we gradually became accustomed to new ways of governing. At the end of the 2019-20 school year, the Seneca High School Board of Education met both in person and virtually, as some members attended on site, while others participated via Zoom. Where possible, we reduced our meeting time by placing nonobligatory items on hold. Members of the public wishing to participate in the board meetings could sit in the Commons and view the meetings over Zoom. As we transitioned to summer, we vacated the smaller board room and began to conduct our meetings in the larger Commons area where we could socially distance and allow for public participation.

So, the SHS Board of Education has adapted to these temporary disruptions. It is our responsibility to continue the pursuit of our Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals, even during these challenging times. To that end, we are not shutting down our improvement efforts, but rather taking common-sense steps to work in a safe and prudent manner.

Furthermore, the SHS Board of Education is proud of the outstanding work of our staff and the cooperation of our students and families. In the pages that follow, you will learn more about how Seneca High School has approached the conundrum of schooling during a pandemic to provide our students with the best possible experience.

On behalf of the entire Seneca High School Board of Education, kudos to the administration and staff for all they have done to make in-person learning and remote learning possible at Seneca High School, and a hearty thank you to the community for your support. Please stay safe.

Ron Frye  
SHS Board President



SHS Board of Education Members:

Ron Frye, President; Sara Olson, Vice President; Rich Hamilton, Secretary; Joe Johnson, Cory Yandell, Jason Eltrevoog, and Tiffany Biros



# THE IMPORTANCE OF AN EDUCATION

From the Desk of SHS Superintendent, Dr. James Carlson

## Schooling During the Covid-19 Pandemic

In addition to the serious physical toll the disease takes on those who contract it, COVID-19 seems to have infiltrated every crack and crevice of living, wreaking havoc on even the most basic elements of daily life. In March 2020, Governor Pritzker shut down Illinois schools because of the Coronavirus, at first, for only a few weeks, but eventually for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. One of the more miniscule casualties of the school closing was the decision not to publish a Spring 2020 newsletter. As you can tell, I am very happy to announce that the newsletter is back.

I love challenges; therefore, I eagerly anticipated working with the Seneca High School administrative team to complete some demanding work to make SHS even better than it is already. The conclusion of the 19-20 and the beginning of the 20-21 school years, however, have proven to be the most challenging in my career. Not a whiney, woe-is-me challenge, but rather an *ok, we must figure out how we can still be THE Seneca High School under these conditions* type of challenge. Fortunately for us, SHS is blessed with an outstanding Board of Education, talented and caring staff members, and a supportive community. We quickly took to trying to reinvent school in accordance with continually changing regulations and guidance.

The 19-20 school year ended abruptly. We received word that the governor was shutting down schools even as we inched toward Spring Break. Unknowingly, SHS closed its doors for the remainder of the school year on March 17. Closing out the 19-20 school year was akin to educational triage. Things were happening rapidly and then changing very quickly, and we struggled to provide our stakeholders with timely and accurate information. Constantly revised guidance from policymakers had us hopscotching as we strove to develop our remote learning plan. In the end, the educational program we provided our students was the best we could offer under the circumstances, and yet for most of our students and staff, it fell infinitely short of our vision of effective schooling.

The beginning of the 20-21 school year has been similarly challenging as rules and regulations continually evolve. The story of this school year, however, has been the return to in-person learning. Approximately 94% of our students have chosen in-person schooling. Students choosing remote learning participate synchronously with their peers learning in-person. This model is very challenging for our teachers, who are to be commended for their outstanding work both last spring and this year.

In the pages that follow, we will attempt to tell the story of schooling at Seneca High School during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is an ever-evolving story of unsung heroes making Herculean efforts to give our students the best educational program possible. It is about resilient students trying to make sense of a world turned upside down. We have experienced tremendous successes and epic failures. Despite our fears, aggravation, fatigue, and yearning for a return to normalcy, what strikes me the most about this story is the perseverance, dedication, ingenuity, effort, and positivity of our staff. On behalf of the entire Seneca High School staff, I wish all our families health, happiness, and a speedy end to the pandemic.





# THE IRISH HIGHLIGHTER



Message from our CSBO, Dan Stecken

Author Bob Goss once advised to, “Embrace uncertainty, that some of the most beautiful chapters in our lives won’t have a title until much later...” The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly made our lives and operations at Seneca Township High School uncertain. As new mandates and advisories have emerged, the administration has been progressive in our approach. In coordination with our Technology and Custodial Departments, the district’s business office was able to secure CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Recovery, and Economic Security) grant funding to help manage increased expenditures due to COVID-19.

During this unique time, several Seneca Township High School employees have risen to the challenge to implement CARES grant funding to provide safety, sanitation, and technology efforts to our students and staff. Mrs. Nadine Maierhofer, Administrative Secretary, spearheaded our CARES efforts organizationally. Mrs. Maierhofer has served as our CARES grant shepherd, managing teacher protective equipment needs, as well as custodial sanitation supplies. Through CARES grant funding, the district was able to secure a new Clorox 360 mobile cleaning apparatus, at no additional budgetary cost to the district, while also purchasing a new Victory Backpack Sanitation Sprayer/Fogger system to ensure efficiency in our sanitation efforts. While Mrs. Maierhofer also managed our district’s personal protective equipment needs, such as a variety of masks for all students and staff, social distancing signage, face shields, and other materials, Mrs. Lesley McGuan, District Bookkeeper, has been responsible for the payment of these bills and navigating new waters in this challenging time. Nadine and Lesley are a dynamic team as they keep the business office running efficiently and shepherd the district expenditures proactively and responsibly.

Thinking progressively, the administration was also able to navigate uncharted waters with a more advanced remote learning approach this fall. In addition to organizing our sanitation efforts, the CARES grant also funded many of our remote learning initiatives, led by Technology Coordinator, Mr. Martin Harig, and Computer Technician Eric Grunauer. Mr. Harig and Mr. Grunauer were able to coordinate remote teaching and learning opportunities for our staff and students, including expanded monitors, higher-resolution webcams, advanced Zoom subscriptions, and other technology needs through CARES grant funding.

Truly, Seneca Township High School is fortunate to have employees who have the wherewithal to seek expanded opportunities such as CARES grant funding. The district continues to be successful in uncertain times, due to the efforts of our employees who work diligently behind the scenes. While the 2020-21 school year has been one of uncertainty, the efforts of our staff remain diligent in this trying time as they assist in creating meaningful chapters of great educational opportunities for our students.

Respectfully,

Dan Stecken  
Chief School Business Officer  
Seneca Township High School





# SENECA HIGH SCHOOL'S NEWEST ADDITIONS

From the Desk of SHS Principal, Marty Voiles



## Staff and Students Adjust to New Daily Procedures

As the Seneca High School administration began examining various options for the reopening of the 2020-2021 school year, there were two points that became abundantly clear: “normal” routines would look much different, and various new expectations would be implemented as students returned for the new school year.

As most are aware, the 2019-2020 school year came to a close with all students at SHS and throughout the state of Illinois learning remotely. This two and a half month experience provided many challenges and obstacles for students and staff, especially as most had no training on how to execute daily procedures remotely.

During the month of June, district administration began planning for the 2020-2021 school year and distributed a parent survey allowing all families the opportunity to weigh in with their thoughts regarding how school should reopen in the fall. Overwhelmingly, parents conveyed the hope and desire for school to resume with traditional in-person learning. These survey results instantly gave district administration the impetus to construct a plan that allowed for as much of a normal routine for all students as possible, while reassuring parents, students, and staff that daily safety procedures and protocols would be maintained.

After careful planning and consideration, SHS opened the 2020-2021 school year on Wednesday, August 19, with our traditional freshman orientation and then attendance for grades 9-12 on Thursday, August 20. Currently, our school day begins at 7:55 and concludes at 1:10 p.m. To date, our students and staff have done a wonderful job following strict county and state guidelines as we maintain daily instruction.

Some of the new daily routines that have been implemented to maintain a healthy and safe school environment include:

- **Daily health certification.** All parents must identify daily that their son/daughter does not have any COVID signs and symptoms before entering a school bus or building.
- **Designated gathering areas.** Before school begins each day, students are required to be in designated areas, socially distant, and wearing masks until classes begin. These areas are monitored by school personnel.
- **Masks.** All students and staff entering the high school MUST wear a mask at all times. The only exception to this procedure is during a 5-minute mask break outside the building, which is provided for all students and monitored by staff.
- **Social Distancing.** All social distancing guidelines are in place and re-emphasized daily with students and staff.
- **Grab and Go Lunch.** Students are provided an opportunity to sign up for grab and go lunch at the conclusion of their last class.
- **One-way hallways.** All hallways at SHS have been designated as one-way hallways to control the foot traffic of students before and after school and between classes.
- **Adjusted bell system.** School dismissal times are separated into two dismissal times, which allows for a more limited release of students in the halls and parking lots after school.
- **Desk cleaning.** All teachers and staff are responsible for cleaning desktops and high touch areas at the conclusion of each class period. Our housekeeping staff completes regular deep-cleaning at the conclusion of each instructional day.

I am extremely happy to share that our students and staff have done a wonderful job following guidelines, adjusting to new safety procedures, and following expectations as set forth in our reopening plan. As has been the case from day one with this pandemic, everything remains fluid and is subject to change. I commend our students and staff for a job well-done and strongly encourage all to keep a strong focus on the specific safeguards when away from SHS. We all realize our biggest challenges may be ahead, but it has truly been a wonderful restart to the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year.

**Go Irish!!**



# THE IRISH HIGHLIGHTER



From the Desk of Activities Director, Steve Haines

## Keeping SHS Virus Free

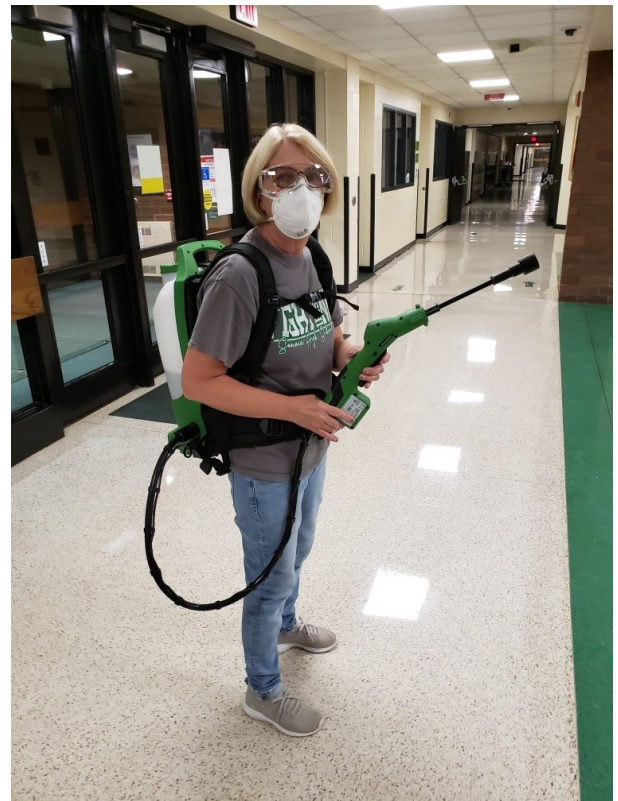
For months and months now, you have been hearing about the heroes of this pandemic. The nurses, doctors, and frontline medical personnel are fighting this virus every day and are surely heroes for putting themselves in harm's way to help those who have been infected with COVID-19. We are very blessed at Seneca High School to have administrators, staff, students, and parents who have gone the extra mile to ensure that our students can attend in-person school in the Land of the Irish. Not every school has been able to make this happen, and it is the dedication of all involved that has allowed us to continue without interruption.

There is a special group of individuals at Seneca High School that I would like to call our "heroes." These are the SHS housekeepers. They take their role very seriously: ensuring proper cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting, as well as doing everything in their power to keep this virus from being spread in our school. The Seneca High School housekeepers are Kathy Phelan, Jeff Szafranski, Dawn Szafranski, Cory McGeorge, Yvonne Coss, Mike O'Kray, and Gary Culbreth. These individuals are working every day to make sure that table tops, desks, chairs, door handles, restrooms, locker rooms, hall lockers, and all highly used items are sanitized and disinfected so that the building is safe for student use the next day.

To help the housekeepers in this endeavor, Seneca High School purchased three Clorox Total 360 disinfectant sprayers to be used in high traffic areas and on equipment that is used often. Seneca High School is very proud of our housekeepers for doing their part to keep us all safe and all in school. If you happen to see any of our great SHS housekeepers, please stop and say thank you for their part in keeping us safe.



Thank  
You



# THE IRISH HIGHLIGHTER



From the Desk of Assistant Principal, Mike Coughlin

Levi Maierhofer, a senior at Seneca High School, has been a busy guy! He has been involved in numerous projects revolving around his appreciation of high school sports. More specifically, Levi is crazy about sports mascots and logos. This “obsession” started for him quite a while ago when he started memorizing baseball mascots. Eventually, he found a website that was dedicated to all professional sports mascots. From there, he came up with the idea of creating a website([hslogos.com](http://hslogos.com)) dedicated to high school logos. He remembers sending out an email to many coaches across Illinois on the last day of school his freshman year. After numerous Youtube videos, hundreds of hours of work, and a graphic design class, Levi has created a website in which he can take pride for many years.

In addition to his website, Levi has gotten quite a bit of media coverage over the past year with his involvement in Illinois Gym Showdown. Levi managed to create a sort of distraction from all of the COVID-19 conversations for basketball players and coaches this past spring with his #IllinoisGymShowdown.

Last but certainly not least, Levi stays pretty busy at Seneca High School too. He manages to pursue all of his interests with ease while still carrying a 4.25 GPA, even as he takes challenging classes. Levi has earned many accolades along the way too. In fact, the list of FFA, leadership, and Student of the Month awards are too many to list. Additionally, he has been involved in Speech, TRUST, FFA, CIA, FCA, Drama Club, and Cross Country, as well as broadcasting for Irish Live. We already know that he’s going to be well-prepared for a successful career, which will probably be related to sports broadcasting/journalism. It’s not a stretch to think we might see him on TV announcing for the Chicago Cubs someday. Congratulations to Levi for all the hard work and well-deserved recognition over the past four years!



HSLogos.com

Levi Maierhofer

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Twitter- @hslogoscom







# THE IRISH HIGHLIGHTER



From the Desk of School Psychologist, Jill Rockrohr

## Meeting the Needs of Students with Disabilities

The COVID-19 pandemic has no doubt brought challenges for all areas of education. As our teachers are demonstrating the ultimate flexibility to meet the needs of all learners, our Special Education Department has risen to the challenge. I had the pleasure of interviewing our special education teachers regarding their experiences navigating the obstacles during these unprecedented times.

When asked how this year has been different from previous school years, our teachers highlighted our necessary reliance on technology as one of the greatest differences. As teachers are simultaneously instructing students both in-person and remotely, reliable and innovative technology is key. Mr. Blake Slutz referred to this year as a “technological Renaissance” in which teachers, students, and parents alike are utilizing modern technology to meet educational demands. Teachers reflected on the unexpected competence they have gained over the past eight months with Zoom, online learning platforms, and even hardware such as microphones and cameras. Mrs. Allie Keinath indicated that there is a responsibility for teachers to help students learn to organize themselves digitally, which is a new skill for many. From passwords and Zoom links to assignments and notes, students are learning how to create systems to function in this new type of classroom.

Furthermore, working with students with disabilities presents unique challenges in the face of the pandemic. Our teachers agreed that the biggest challenge this year has been ensuring that each student’s individual needs are met. Providing individualized instruction while maintaining social distancing has led to “out of the box” thinking, such as recording verbal instructions for student replay and using digital tools such as screen reading software. Teachers have been creative in their solutions to continue collaborative work while maintaining social distancing, such as collaborating in Google Docs or meeting in small groups via Zoom. When faced with the reality of canceling experiential education for her Life Skills students, Mrs. Jackie Ugolini adapted. Instead of in-person grocery shopping trips to learn budgeting and meal planning, Mrs. Ugolini taught the same skills by having students place online grocery orders for pick-up. Of course, with all of the changes this year has brought, our paraprofessionals have been invaluable to the success of our students.

When asked if anything positive has come from this experience, the response was unanimous -- positive attitudes toward school. Teachers have described a feeling of renewed gratitude toward in-person school. There is a sense of taking less for granted and seeing the value in what we can offer our students. Mr. Levi Derber said it best: “I missed my students!” Mr. Slutz also praised the growth in students’ critical thinking skills during the remote period and through the return to school, as students have had to adapt to changes in expectations, schedules, and procedures. Finally, teachers highlighted the camaraderie among staff this year. With teachers supporting each other and sharing resources and ideas, there truly is a feeling of being “all in this together.”







# SAFETY AND SECURITY

Message from SRO, Ken Sangston



The Covid-19 Pandemic has brought about many changes in our everyday life. One of those changes was the rise in the use of social media platforms to stay connected with one another as school came to a sudden end in March. Recent studies since March 2020 showed the use of Facebook, alone, tallied a 78.1% increase, Instagram 49.5%, and Snapchat 29.4%, among all ages, but especially with teens. Social Media was the platform in which our students stayed connected while they were distant from one another, especially in the early months of the pandemic. Unfortunately, the increase in the use of social media widens the window for one to become a victim of a crime. These crimes range from identity theft, stalking, revenge crime, and cyberbullying. Other misuse includes harassment and threats. I have dealt with social media issues among students, and, luckily, most of those issues have been minor. A tactic that we have adopted at Seneca High School when it comes to students and social media is the acronym THINK. T- is what you are posting **true**? H- is what you are posting **hurtful**? I- is what you are posting **Illegal**? N- is what you are posting **necessary**? K- is what you are posting **kind**? Many minor issues can be avoided if this acronym is used and we THINK before we click send, and then perhaps we can avoid emotional or knee-jerk reaction type of postings. My advice to parents is to ask questions about your child's social media. Be inquisitive but not over-bearing. After all, it is in everyone's job description to protect our kids from being victims of a crime. As social media platforms evolve and new issues emerge, social media will continue to provide challenges for the teen brain, both good and bad. Feel free to follow me on Twitter, *Irish SRO Officer Sangston*.

In addition to my regular duties at SHS, I have been visiting various classrooms. For instance, I have participated in Mr. Kelsey Adams' Current Issues class where we have had great discussions on officer-involved shooting incidents and viewed videos of the most recent incidents that have impacted the nation. I must say that Mr. Adams' students were completely engaged in this topic and their assignment. I also had the pleasure of visiting Mr. Jace Walsh's American National Government class. We spoke about the Bill of Rights, predominately on the Fourth Amendment. I will finish out the semester presenting on opioid addiction in Mr. Dan Baker's Health Class and in Mrs. Jen Baxter's Drivers Ed Class, where I will discuss impaired driving and a driver's responsibility during a traffic stop.

**Be safe and stay healthy.**

Before You...

**THINK**

**T** = Is it True?  
**H** = Is it Helpful?  
**I** = Is it Inspiring?  
**N** = Is it Necessary?  
**K** = Is it Kind?

www.horndogsofscotland.com





# Congratulations on Their Years of Service!



Mrs. Mary O'Connor is a 1988 graduate of the University of Illinois. She received her M.S. degree from the University of St. Francis.

This school year is Mrs. O'Connor's 33rd year in education, all of which have been at Seneca High School. Mrs. O'Connor has taught Spanish 1, 2, 3 & 4, English 2, and ESL. Mrs. O'Connor has coached the SHS Speech Team, Cheerleading Squad, Freshmen Volleyball, has been a class advisor, and advisor for the Spanish Club.



Mrs. O'Connor provided the following advice for future teachers entering the field: "Bad days and even bad years will pass quickly. Be proud of how hard you are trying and how much you are learning."



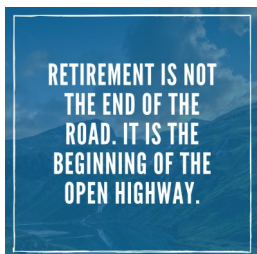
Mrs. Marcia Machetta graduated from Illinois Valley Community College with an Associate of Arts degree, Illinois State University with a Bachelor of Science degree, and National Louis University with a Master's degree.

This school year is Mrs. Machetta's 38<sup>th</sup> year of in teaching, with 37 of those years teaching at SHS. Mrs. Machetta has taught all English I-IV, Reading Development, Drama, Humanities, Yearbook, and French. Her extra-curricular involvement includes: directing school plays, coaching JV volleyball, Assistant Coach of girls softball, and she has been the yearbook advisor at SHS that last 22 years.



Mrs. Machetta provided the following advice for teachers entering the field: "Don't sweat the small stuff; keep a sense of humor; enjoy your students; learn from your students; take advice from experienced teachers, but don't be afraid to share your youthful enthusiasm and new ideas; and be appreciative of the opportunity to help influence and mold our future."

On behalf of the Board of Education, staff, and students of Seneca High School, we congratulate Mrs. O'Connor and Mrs. Machetta and wish them the very best in their upcoming retirement!!





# THE IRISH HIGHLIGHTER

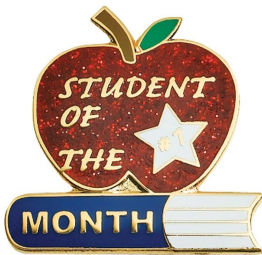
Students of the Month



**Students of the Month Picture—Left to Right:**  
Nate Aldrich, Most Improved - August  
Faith Baker, Rookie - August  
Levi Maierhofer, Student of the Month - August  
Amber Vroman, Student of the Month - September  
Carter Thomas, Rookie - August

**Pictured Below from Left to Right:**  
Madison Jones, Role Model - August  
Riley Johnson, Role Model - September  
Katelynn Buchanan, Most Improved - September  
Hanah Bradley, Rookie - September

## AUGUST / SEPTEMBER



**Students of the Month Picture**  
Left to Right, Front Row:  
Paige Baker, Student of the Month—November  
Gracie Steffes, Rookie—October  
Delaney Welsh, Role Model—October



Left to Right, Back Row:  
Daniel Doloski, Rookie—November  
Mahmoud Abushanab, Most Improved - October  
Daniel Widman, Student of the Month - October  
Cole Hintze, Most Improved—November  
Brayden Roe, Role Model—November

## OCTOBER / NOVEMBER





# THE IRISH HIGHLIGHTER

## Student Highlight / Social Distancing



### DAR Good Citizen Award Student Honored

Levi Maierhofer was recently honored with the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Good Citizen Award for Seneca High School. He is the son of Jenna and Jeff Maierhofer of Seneca. The Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizen Award honors an outstanding senior who exhibits the qualities of dependability, leadership, service, and patriotism. The selection was voted on by the faculty and staff.

Levi currently serves as the Seneca FFA Leadership Team Chairman, the Section 7 FFA Reporter, and the Irish Live Broadcasting Head Sports caster and Student Director. He is in National Honor Society, FFA, Cross Country, Scholastic Bowl, Baseball, Speech Team, Fall Plays, Spring Musicals, Math Team, Concert/Marching/Pep Band, Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), Conservation in Action (CIA), Drama Club, Spanish Club, Teens Resisting Unhealthy Social Temptations (TRUST), Student Ambassadors, Wind Ensemble, and Worldwide Youth in Science and Engineering (WYSE).

Being the recipient of the DAR Good Citizen Award, Levi 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.



In keeping our Students, Faculty, and Staff safe this school year, these are just some of the social distancing signs you will find throughout the one-way hallways of Seneca High School.



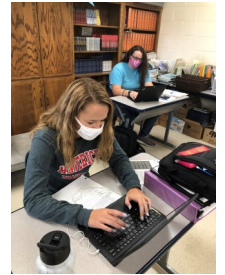
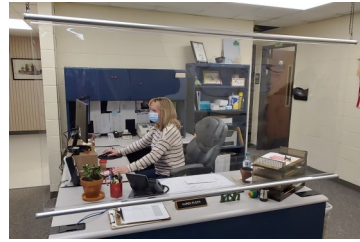
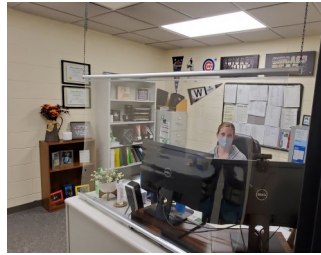




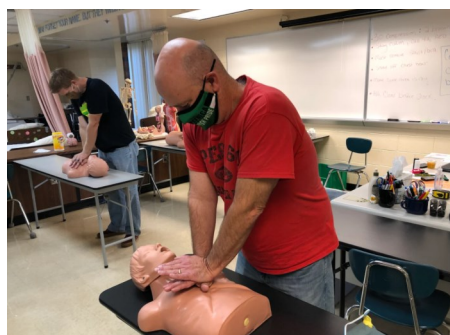
# THE IRISH HIGHLIGHTER

## COVID Changes @ SHS

This year is a little different for all of us, Students, Staff, Faculty and Administration included.



Social Distancing  
at Seneca High  
School



# THE IRISH HIGHLIGHTER



Class of 2021 Student Article



Teachers are the backbone of the schooling system; they are in charge of passing down their knowledge to the next generation of productive society members. Every year brings new, unforeseen challenges that make it difficult for teachers as an entirety to successfully do this task. But still, they persevere and take each difficulty in stride and make the best out of bad situations; this has never been more apparent than in the 20-21 school year.

The COVID-19 pandemic has required schools worldwide to shut down and has left children attending school virtually, where they have been forced to adapt to this new and less-effective way of learning. But for Seneca, we have been lucky to stay in-person. Students were given the choice to either attend school virtually or physically, with an overwhelming majority choosing the latter option. While everyone at the school is grateful for the ability to be present and with one another, precautions that have been put in place are making it difficult for students and teachers alike. The sense of normalcy is difficult to create in an atmosphere that makes people feel they are apart rather than together.

Teachers of various classes have had to alter their lessons plans and even seating charts to accommodate these new regulations. Classes working in smaller groups to share thoughts and ideas have now become almost nonexistent. With socially-distanced desks, teachers are relying on students to voice their opinions with the class rather than one or two classmates. This is intimidating for many students and has made it incredibly difficult to have thorough class discussions, with the teachers feeling that they are having to pull teeth by asking a simple question. But possibly the most difficult aspect of this year has been teaching those that are online, either by choice or compliance.

With a significant number of students being required to quarantine in recent weeks, Zoom participants are at a high, with morale at a low. "Keeping remote students focused and on task is difficult," says Spanish teacher Mary O'Connor. "Keeping them as included as those physically present is especially hard." For teachers, having a large number of students online has posed issues that, at times, are unavoidable. Not only are there constant technical difficulties on both ends, but being inclusive of those that are virtual is not easy. Teachers want every student to feel included, but the physical and emotional distance makes it that much harder. Even remembering the small details can send an entire lesson plan awry. Having to constantly affirm that the virtual learners can hear the instructor, see the screen, or even understand the assignment can be draining.

These struggles are heightened when teachers themselves must quarantine. This requires substitutes to monitor the classrooms while they are virtual, and students must then attend a zoom for the entirety of the class period. The quality of both teaching and learning is not the same when this occurs, leading to all parties involved feeling unmotivated and disinterested. An added struggle to this virtual aspect is outside the classroom.

With all the teachers having families of their own, personal tragedies can strike at any moment. Especially with the current pandemic, having a loved one be diagnosed with the virus can be detrimental to one's psyche. Having to put on the persona that everything is fine to be present and excited for the students it is not easy to do. Even when there are no personal health crises, those that have children are feeling the weight of these hardships. Teachers with children outside the district and fully remote feel that they are always on the clock, having to teach their students at work and then proceeding to teach their own kids at home. Teachers want both their school and biological families to succeed, but they understand that these circumstances have made it all the more difficult.

Besides the emotional change, the quality of work has been altered too. Many teachers are having to cut back on their units and take items off the curriculum because there simply is not enough time. While some students may enjoy a slightly lightened workload, the overall quality is not the same. Even masks are altering the school experience. With many teachers relying on students' facial expressions to sense their feelings, they are now at a loss. This factor leads many to feel frustrated with not being able to tell what is truly going on behind those masks, both physically and metaphorically.

Teachers chose this occupation because they genuinely enjoy sharing their knowledge with the next generation and want to be figures that students can look up to. While the current pandemic has made their jobs undeniably harder, they are still trying their best. The students are grateful for the positive energy and attempt at normalcy that is given every day by the teachers. Despite all the despair in the world, the teachers continue to be a bright spot.

Written by Seneca High School Senior, Ava Terry





# THE IRISH HIGHLIGHTER

## Athletic Information/Board



### 2020-21 Athletic Schedule Changes Due to COVID Restrictions



While we all appreciate that SHS has been able to offer in-person learning for our students throughout the fall semester, unfortunately, we have not been able to continue with all of our athletic activities during their normally scheduled seasons. On a positive note, our Irish golfers and cross-country runners were able to start and complete their seasons. The Golf Team had a great season, including capturing the Tri-County Conference title. Additionally, AJ Stiegler finished 4<sup>th</sup> at the IHSA Sectional and would have qualified for the state finals. The Cross Country team also had a great season as the boys' and girls' teams competed at sectionals and ran well enough that both teams would have qualified for the state finals. I say "would have qualified" because the IHSA was unable to host a state final in these sports due to the COVID restrictions on the gathering limits at events. Regardless, these teams were able to compete and experience great seasons that were fun, competitive, and completely safe.

Unfortunately, to date, we have only been able to start and finish those two sports seasons. Football and volleyball were postponed, and, currently, basketball, cheerleading, swimming, and dance are paused but hoping for a delayed start to the winter season. Wrestling, which is normally part of the winter season, has been postponed to later in the school year. Other sports affected by these postponements are the spring sports: track, baseball, and softball. Here is the current schedule of 2020-21 athletic events:

#### Winter Season: November 30, 2020 – February 13, 2021

CURRENTLY PAUSED (No restart date has been communicated at this time)  
Boys Basketball, Girls Basketball, Cheerleading, Dance, Swimming  
Wrestling MOVED to Summer Season

#### NEW Spring Season: February 15, 2021 – May 1, 2021

Football, Volleyball

#### NEW Summer Season: April 19, 2021 – June 26, 2021

Track, Baseball, Softball, and NEW Wrestling season



The **Seneca High School Board of Education** would like to wish  
you all a very **Merry Christmas**  
and a **Happy New Year**  
Please stay safe



Left to Right, Secretary Rich Hamilton, Board Member Jason Eltrevoog, Vice President Sara Olson, Board Member Cory Yandell, President Ron Frye, Board Member Joe Jonson, Board Member Tiffany



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