

## Fall 2024 Seneca High School Newsletter

### **The Seneca Way**

Years ago, the Seneca Township High School Board of Education passed its district mission based upon ***The Seneca Way***, to prepare and support ALL STUDENTS for success and post-high school opportunities through a challenging, rewarding, and engaging educational program, while developing Irish Pride.

In that vein, we are excited by the work the administration has completed to earn the district's first **College & Career Pathway in Health Sciences**. Our district nurse, Mrs. Taylor Neurohr, has been instrumental in helping Seneca High School health science students earn up to 14 Illinois Valley Community College (IVCC) Dual Credit hours in nursing. Principal Mike Coughlin shared, "Our daughters were lucky, like many others at SHS, to have caring teachers, and opportunities to balance high quality classroom instruction with many hours of on-the-job experience. They were ready for a CNA job or the opportunity to pursue a bachelor's degree in nursing on their graduation day. Kudos to SHS for providing such a valuable opportunity!" Mr. Coughlin explains more on pages 9 and 10.

Additionally, we are excited that our students have the opportunity to benefit from the work of our mathematics department. The creation of our vocational math class has offered students real-life practical math problems & skills to use in trades, such as concrete finishing, wood framing, cabinet and countertop installation, landscape work, etc.

From earning dual credits or taking remedial courses to eliminate having to take "0" hour classes at the next level, our students are benefitting from multiple forms of meaningful math instruction. According to high school mathematics teacher Mr. Brian Holman, "Our dual credit math programs at SHS span from Algebra 3, which offers a student transcript code to guarantee enrollment in "for credit" classes at colleges in Illinois, all the way to Calculus 1 which is the highest-level class that high school students are able to test into. This wide range of classes gives every junior and senior options for math classes that suit their future academic needs if they wish to pursue education past the high school level."

Offering meaningful educational opportunities for our students is a critical piece of ***The Seneca Way*** that we are proud to showcase through our programming.

Ron Frye

SHS Board of Education President

Message from Superintendent, Dr. Dan Stecken

“If opportunity doesn’t knock, build a door.” The on-going facility improvements at Seneca High School have been part of the district’s strategic plan of ***The Seneca Way***, leaving exciting imprints on our district. Students’ input has been a vital component of our completed phases and continues into our future projects.

The Superintendent Student Advisory Committee has left a lasting legacy on the walls of Seneca High School with its district branding initiatives. “Being a part of the Superintendent Committee has allowed me to make a difference in the visionary aspects of my school, and incorporate not only my ideas, but also other students’ ideas into a reality.” – Seneca High School Senior Audry McNabb

Most recently, this same group of students left their mark, creating the Athletics Hallway murals and FFA legacy mural.

“Through selecting photos for the sports murals and (coming soon) the History of Seneca mural, I got the chance to open up old yearbooks and dig through historical photos of Seneca, and learning about stories, places, and people provided more meaning to my experience in our town and school.” – Seneca High School Senior Clara Bruno

Most recently, facility improvements continued in the Agricultural Department with a commercial kitchen upgrade. "The new SHS Ag kitchen made a major positive impact on our department and has greatly helped with all of our food-related events. With this new facility, we have been able to better prepare for FFA contests such as the dairy foods CDE and meat judging CDE, as well as continue preparing everyone's favorite pork chops!" – SHS AG Teacher Mrs. Cally Hatton

As we wrapped up the first ***Shipyard Showdown Christmas Tournament***, the feedback from the community and neighboring towns was nothing short of flattering. SHS staff beamed with *Irish Pride* from the amount of compliments we received.

We celebrate the many co-curricular opportunities extended to our students such as the ever-growing work of our **Irish Live** broadcast on YouTube.

SHS’s own YouTube channel continues to grow and include students in real-life career practical experiences.

We continue to upgrade our facilities, currently remodeling the baseball and softball field, even using the Vocational Math class to assist in landscape work on the softball berm.

From robotics to CNC machinery, a state-of-the-art auto shop, welding and woods shops, the opportunities in vocational coursework at SHS are unrivaled. “The wide range of CTE classes that we offer at SHS help students prepare for the future by honing their problem-solving and critical thinking skills, developing communication and collaboration skills, and learning to solve problems with the use of technology.” – Seneca High School Career Technical Education teacher Mr. Bryan Erickson

Future facility plans include improvements at the FFA Land Lab, as well as upgrades to the Media Center, Main Office, and Science Labs. Seneca High School is truly building doors for our students to step into promising futures.

Message from Dean of Students, Mr. Mark Giertz

#### Veteran’s Day Remembrance

Here at Seneca high school we are fortunate to have students, staff, and the community members that want to make our district great every single day. On November 11, our FFA program, with the direction and support of Mr. Windham, Mrs. Hatton and Mr. Christian, facilitated a phenomenal Veterans Day program. Having the opportunity to bring this event into the newly finished gymnasium was once again an amazing site to see. Mr. Windham’s band performed beautifully and all were captivated by the video board productions by Mr. Houchin.

The morning program was an unbelievable tribute to the brave men and women who have served our nation. The heartfelt speeches, moving performances, and community pride truly captured what Veterans Day is all about: **honor, gratitude, and remembrance.**

The picture below captures a small moment in what our students, staff, military veterans and community members got to take part in. We are truly blessed to have the resources and facility to put on such a great production.

Thank you again to our Music and FFA departments for an amazing program!

Message from Principal Mr. Mike Coughlin

Seneca High School is excited to offer a new College & Career Pathway to their students during the 24 - 25 school year. The Healthcare pathway has been approved by the State Board of Education for the 24 - 25 school year. Each student completing the Health Sciences (Certified Nursing Assistant) will have an individual plan, which includes college planning linked to early understanding of career goals, financial aid, resume building and a personal statement. Mrs. Neurohr recently shared with the Seneca High School board of

Education a summary of the Healthcare pathway. Students will have the opportunity to create an individual plan that addresses preparation activities, career exploration, at least two years of coursework, which will include 14 college credit hours and hands-on experience. Students are currently finishing up their clinical work at the Ottawa Pavilion.

## **College and Career Pathway Endorsements**

### *What are College and Career Pathway Endorsements?*

The state of Illinois' Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act includes a process for school districts to award a College and Career Pathway Endorsement (CCPE) to high school graduates. Students have the opportunity to earn endorsements by completing an individualized learning plan, a career-focused instructional sequence, and professional learning opportunities.

Seneca High School students who meet the requirements will earn a seal on their diplomas that recognizes their commitment to their particular pathway and program of study. Through CCPE, a student gains essential employability and technical competencies in their identified sector.

Awareness, exploration, and preparation activities that provide opportunities for students to interact with adults in their workplace.

### ***The Framework***

#### INDIVIDUAL PLAN

Each student completing an endorsement must have an individualized plan, which includes college planning linked to early understanding of career goals, financial aid, resume, and personal statement.

#### PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Awareness, exploration, and preparation activities that provide opportunities for students to interact with adults in their workplace.

#### CAREER-FOCUSED INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE

Two years of secondary coursework, or equivalent competencies, that articulate to a postsecondary credential with labor market value. Must include at least 6 hours of early college credit.

#### ACADEMIC READINESS

Ready for non-remedial coursework in reading and math by high school graduation through criteria defined by district and local community college.

### ***Which Pathway Endorsements are being offered currently?***

Seneca High School is offering an endorsement in Health Sciences and Technology with plans to add more in coming years. The following list has the endorsement area, specific pathway, and classes needed to fulfill the dual credit portion requirements for students to earn the endorsement on their high school diploma.

### ***What outside classroom experience is required for the CNA Pathway?***

Of the required 60 hours of work based learning required, 40 hours will be met through clinicals in the Certified Nursing Assistant Course. *An additional 20 hours will need to be completed outside of school. Hours must be a related supervised career developmental experience in the Healthcare field with a professional skills assessment.*

All students must turn in their hours and assessment to their Guidance counselor and Principal prior to the last Friday in May of the current school year.

Mrs. Jessi Holman (student last names A - K).

Mr. Chris Jackson (student last names L - Z).

Message from School Psychologist, Jill Rockrohr

### **Thanksgiving Basket Program**

Our Thanksgiving Basket Program was once again successful this year, thanks to the support of our school staff, students, community members, and local organizations. Mrs. Leake began this program last year to provide a complete Thanksgiving meal to families within our district in need. In early November, SST classes were provided with a list of nonperishable items to collect. The SST classes with the most donations were rewarded with a pizza party sponsored by RISE. Contest winners were Mrs. Neurohr's class (1st place), Mr. Christian's class (2nd place) and Mrs. Maierhofer's class (third place). Staff and community member contributions were sizable as well, with all turkeys donated.

Beyond collecting donations, assembly of baskets was also a large undertaking. Students and staff donated their time before school to wrap boxes, and multiple classes assisted with sorting items and building boxes. Special thanks to Mrs. Keinath, Mr. Brungard, Mr. Baker, and Mrs. Foster and their classes for assisting with various tasks.

Assembled baskets were provided to families on Monday, November 25th through pickup or delivery, with multiple staff members volunteering to deliver baskets locally. This year,

we were able to provide 52 families with complete meals, serving 247 individuals. We look forward to continuing this tradition for years to come!

Thank you to our generous sponsors, without whom this program would not be successful:

Johnson Oil/Seneca BP  
Constellation  
Freedom Baptist Church  
Seneca Grade School  
Jerry Burkhead  
Doug Woods  
Shannon Ingram

Message from Athletic Director, Mr. Ted O'Boyle

### **2024—Shipyard Showdown**

Seneca High School is excited to host the 2024 Shipyard Showdown. This tournament will feature 16 area boys' basketball teams all vying to be the champion. This tournament started as the Marseilles Holiday tournament and then moved to Marquette for the last couple of years. We can't wait to showcase our new facility and see who will be crowned the 2024 Shipyard Showdown Champion.

Message from School Psychologist

Because YOU are WORTH it!

Over the past several years, the need for social-emotional learning opportunities has become increasingly evident. Such programs focus on developing students' ability to recognize and manage their emotions, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and navigate the challenges of everyday life. By fostering these essential life skills, we can support academic and social growth to prepare students for success after high school.

Last year, Mrs. Leake and I began participating in WORTH, a teen program through the Arukah Institute of Healing in Princeton, Illinois. This program addresses mental health and substance use in teens through the use of short, weekly videos on various topics. Videos use age-appropriate themes to connect with teens on important topics that affect self-worth, with a tagline of "because YOU are WORTH it." Included in the lesson are discussion questions to further each topic.

Mrs. Leake and I, joined by Lucky the therapy dog, visit each of Mrs. Foster's Student & Career Success classes weekly to present the WORTH lesson to freshman students. During the first semester, we covered a variety of topics, including healthy habits, relationships, resilience, coping skills, and the dangers of vaping. Students were broken into small groups for discussion, with a spokesperson from each group nominated to share their group's thoughts with the class. Many topics generated a lively discussion, such as identifying red and green flags in relationships.

To wrap up our first semester classes, Mrs. Leake and I asked students to write down one thing they learned through the weekly WORTH lessons. Each student contributed, with a variety of responses, including breathing techniques, growth versus fixed mindset, and many coping strategies. Student feedback indicated that students enjoy the weekly lessons and feel that they are beneficial for helping them to cope with everyday stressors. Mrs. Leake and I plan to continue this program through second semester with the new Student & Career Success classes. Thank you to Mrs. Foster for allowing us to visit each week.

Students of the Month broken down by month:

August 2024 Students of the Month

Kevin Einhaus —Role Model

Payton McDonald —Student of the Month

Brynlee Hunt —Rookie

Tessa Krull —Irish Pride

September 2024 Students of the Month

Casey Klicker —Irish Pride

Brady Fort —Rookie

Ben Biros —Student of the Month

Sebastian Deering —Role Model

October 2024 Students of the Month

Bianey Hernandez —Irish Pride

Alise Jackson —Rookie

Memphis Echeverria—Role Model

Clara Bruno — Student of the Month

November 2024 Students of the Month

Maison Yard —Role Model

Natalie Misener —Student of the Month

Liam Knoebel —Irish Pride

Ayden McKnight —Rookie

2024-2025 Illinois State Scholars

Congratulations to the following Seneca High School seniors for being named Illinois State Scholars: Talia Johnson, Layla Fessler, Evelyn O'Connor, Audry McNabb, Aubrie Jackson, Natalie Misener, Clara Bruno, Shelby Welsh-Duckwitz, Christopher Smith, Benjamin Biros, Thomas Milton, Payton McDonald, Tynan Justice, Casey Klicker, Memphis Echeverria.

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

The Illinois State Scholar program is an honorary recognition without any monetary award. To be named an Illinois State Scholar is an outstanding accomplishment that will be a highlight of the recipient's academic record.

### **DAR Good Citizen Award Student Honored**

Clara Bruno was recently honored with the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Good Citizen Award for Seneca High School. She is the daughter of Tamara and Matthew Bruno of Marseilles, IL.

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.

Clara is involved in many clubs, sports, and activities at Seneca High School. She is on the Track and Field team where she has won Rookie of the Year award and the Coaches Award; and the Basketball team where she won the Most Improved Award. She is involved in some of our clubs at school including Fellow Christian Athletes and Spanish Club. She was asked to take part in the Superintendent Advisory Committee for multiple years. While in high school, Clara has really immersed herself in our band program. She has been in jazz band, concert band, pit orchestra for musicals, and choir. On top of all of this, she also volunteers at her church and nursing homes.

Being the recipient of the DAR Good Citizen Award, Clara will complete 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.

### **American Legion Illinois Premier Boys State Completes its 87th Session**

The American Legion Illinois Premier Boys State program completed its 87th session in Charleston, Illinois which was held June 8 through June 14 at Eastern Illinois University. Benjamin Biros of Mazon was one of Seneca High School's students who attended Illinois Premier Boys State and was elected State Treasurer. Ben will also be receiving a scholarship.

The American Legion Premier Boys State program has been teaching Americanism and citizenship processes to rising seniors since 1935. It gives these young men the opportunity to form their government leadership from the city, county, and state levels. In order to accomplish this, these citizens of Premier Boys State must campaign, give speeches, and articulate why they are the best candidate for their respective position. Premier Boys State gives out approximately \$20,000 in scholarship awards every session through essays, interviews, orations, and application processes.

### **Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership Seminar 2024**

Dane Ferrara, Tori Skelton, Alexander Gagnon, and Grace Smith, Seneca High School sophomores, have been selected to represent Seneca Township High School at the 2025 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 home, schools, work-place 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. Dane Ferrara is the son of Doug and Tifanie of Mazon, and Tori Skelton is the daughter of Chad and Danielle Skelton of Verona. Alexander Gagnon is the son of Sarah and Jacob Dodson of Seneca and Grace Smith is the daughter of David Smith of Somonauk and Lurelda Maier-Lorntz of Seneca.

All Seneca High School sophomore students were invited to pick up applications and submit essays for the opportunity to attend this seminar. Congratulations to Dane Ferrara, Tori Skelton, Alexander Gagnon, and Grace Smith on their accomplishment.

## **Reality Store**

Each year Seneca High School hosts an event called the Reality Store for sophomore students to learn about the costs of living. Students get a “paycheck” with fake money in it and a randomly assigned career and family situation – meaning they might be married and might have kids. They have to use the month’s salary on the necessities of life including housing, utilities, transportation, insurance, etc. Besides Seneca High School, the event is made possible by Old National Bank of Seneca, People’s National Bank of Kewanee – Seneca Branch, and Caldwell Banker Real Estate Group of Morris. All three had representatives to work at the Reality Store and they both brought prizes to be given away through a random drawing for the sophomores.

This event really helps students to understand the importance of getting a good paying job for their adult life. It also hopefully gives them the insight of what their parents are going through monthly to try to make ends meet.

Below is a list of the expense’s that students will incur throughout their "Reality Store" experience: Housing, Groceries/Clothing, Child Care, Bank, Wheel of Fortune, Utilities, Insurance, Transportation and Recreation.

## **Illinois State’s 6th Annual Future Teacher Day Conference**

On Friday, October 25th, Mr. Walsh and Mrs. Read took 19 students to Illinois State’s Future Teacher Conference.

Students attended various sessions about being an educator, tailored specifically to their interest in the field. It began with some remarks from ISU’s president and was followed by a performance from the Gamma Phi Circus. Each student started their day with a session on their subject area (math, special education, etc.) before attending a table fair with various clubs and activities. After lunch, students ended the day with two chosen sessions depending on interest. These opportunities included: Admissions and Financial Aid, Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Student Teaching, Tech Playground and International Teaching.

The students that were chosen to attend were: Bailey Kruger, Morgan Starwalt, Brooklyn Sheedy, Brooklyn Szafranski, Kyra Wood, Brady Haines, Lilly Pfeifer, Griffin Hougas, Cody Clennon, Lauryn Barla, Nickolas Griffin, Natalie Misener, Kylee Rowley, Jazmin Metzen, Emma Peterson, Bailey Witte, Emily Brown, Ximena Valenciano, and Clara Bruno.

New Employees for the 2024-2025 School Year:

Dominick Liberatore, AG/Auto Paraprofessional  
Conner Christian, Ag Teacher  
Madison O'Sullivan, START Paraprofessional  
Marsha Henne, Special Needs Paraprofessional  
Chelsea O'Neal, Special Needs Paraprofessional  
Lauren Sandeno, Art Teacher  
Dan Sedlock, Security Monitor  
Molly Wills, Special Needs Paraprofessional

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

**President Ron Frye, Vice President Sara Olson, Secretary Rich Hamilton,  
Board Members: Cory Yandell, Jason Eltrevoog, Tiffany Biros and Joe Johnson**



