

UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

FOCUS

FOR THE COMMUNITY

SPRING 2023

A PUBLICATION FOR THE RESIDENTS OF UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



From the Superintendent...
Robert S. Monroe

Building Student Achievement

Student achievement and success are at the heart of everything we do as a school community.

On average, students attending Utica Community Schools achieve at rates that exceed their state and national peers.

In addition, a Utica Community Schools diploma is a ticket for our graduates to pursue their dreams at the top university, college or trade school of their choice across the country.

But we know we can do even better for our kids!

The Safety and Success proposal that will be considered by voters on May 2 is one important way we will continue to improve student outcomes.

The correlation between facilities and student achievement is well documented. Universities, professional organizations, and research institutes have all studied the importance of the type of facilities where students learn. They have all come to the same conclusion: enhanced classroom space improves student performance.

These studies reinforce how buildings impact learning in key areas, including safety, lighting, air quality, classroom size and space, access to technology, and areas that support 21st century skills like teamwork, creativity and communication.

On May 2, our entire community will consider funding proposals that will make significant improvements to our schools and provide financial stability for our future.

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SAFETY & SUCCESS

MAY 2 ELECTION

The Safety and Success bond proposal will:



Provide important safety enhancements to all of our schools, including additional layers of security at key entry points and other exterior doors.



Address facility needs at all school sites.

All bond projects will be completed over the next ten years without increasing the current tax rate.



NOT increase the district's current debt rate – the lowest in Macomb County.

The Non-Homestead Operating Millage Proposal:



Is a levy in every Michigan community that allows local school districts to receive their full share of state aid.



Is NOT levied on owner-occupied primary homes and has ZERO impact on the home in which you live (your primary residence).



Supports schools operations, including safety initiatives and training, teachers and staff, programs and services and utilities such as heat, water and electricity.



Provides more than \$41 million in annual funding to help maintain academic programs and services that support the school district's track record of excellence.

Celebrating Excellence

Three educators were selected to represent UCS in the Macomb County Teacher of the Year program:

Karen Franks, of Collins Elementary, Rachel Adams, of Jeannette Junior High School, and Dr. Lisa Grunewald, of Henry Ford II High School. *(Continued on page 3)*

Left to right:
Karen Franks, Elementary and UCS Teacher of the Year
Rachel Adams, Junior High Teacher of the Year
Dr. Lisa Grunewald, Senior High Teacher of the Year





GRAEBNER ELEMENTARY

50th Birthday Celebration

Wednesday, May 24
5:30-7:30pm

41875 Saal Road Sterling Heights, MI 48313

Three educators selected as outstanding teachers of the year in Utica Community Schools *Continued from page 1*

Karen Franks is an educational leader committed to a safe and positive learning environment, community engagement, and the use of data to improve student achievement.

“She always leads with kindness, and a listening ear,” said parent Jessica Conti. “My child has gained so much confidence in herself academically and socially this year. She has blossomed into a hard worker, team player and has taken so much pride in her work... thanks to the encouragement from Mrs. Franks, who will forever be in our hearts!”

Rachel Adams serves as the Achievement Via Individualized Determination (AVID) teacher for her school, giving students targeted skills to achieve success in high school and pursue their post-secondary dreams.

“Mrs. Adams is a wonderful teacher and role model,” said eighth grader Adrian Maloney. “She is always kind no matter the situation. She understands any situation and helps any and all students, especially in AVID.”

Dr. Lisa Grunewald inspires her art students to create award winning designs through innovation, a broad spectrum of opportunities, and professional connections that celebrate student work throughout the community.

“Dr. Grunewald is a pillar of our community whose experience, passion, and commitment is exemplary,” Associate Principal Yvonne Swanson said. “She sets a high standard in educating and caring for our students. With her teaching and mentorship, our students are empowered to positively transform their future and the world.”

Points of Pride



UCS Robotics Team – The ThunderChickens – named FIRST Michigan champion

The Utica Community Schools ThunderChickens FIRST Robotics team, Team 217, are state champs and bound to a world tournament that they have captured three times in their history.



The UCS team won the Michigan State Championship along with their alliance partners Wayland Wildcats (Team 6090) from Wayland, MI, and Metal Muscle (Team 1506) from Flint, MI.

Together, the three-team alliance won the Ford Division Championship, and then went on to become the overall State Champions. The competition was held on April 6-8 at Saginaw Valley State University.

“Being able to take a simple 3 minute delivery game and turn it into a heart-racing experience is what the competition gave us and what I enjoyed at States,” said student CEO senior Aidan Petras. “Seeing the excitement and energy in the stands really said it all.”

The ThunderChickens robotics team is made up of 34 UCS students from across the school district.



Grad selected for prestigious law journal

2017 Utica Community Schools graduate Michael Sekich is among six students to have an article selected for the Penn State *Journal of Law and International Affairs*.

His article is *Drawing the Line of Scrimmage – A Global Perspective of Daily Fantasy Sports in the Advertising Space*.

UCS school stores named among nation's best

All four Utica Community Schools high school stores have been honored as among the best in the country.



Top left: Ford Store
Lower left: Utica Store



Top right: Eisenhower Store
Lower Right: Stevenson Store

The Eagles Nest, of Eisenhower High School, The Talon, of Henry Ford II High School, The Titan Shoppe, of Stevenson High School, and The Chief Connection, of Utica High School have Gold Level Certification for the 2022-2023 school year and will be recognized during DECA's International Career Development Conference in Orlando, Florida.

Theatre group honored statewide for innovation and as a “class act”



On February 17-18, Ford theatre students competed in the Michigan Interscholastic Forensic Association One-Act State Festival at Central Michigan University.

Ford's show *Priscilla Dreams the Answer*, placed 3rd in the state for Studio Productions. Ford also earned the “Innovation in Theatre Award” recognizing the performing company that demonstrated the most creativity and the most innovative theatre techniques.

Ford also won the “Fitz Class Act” award. Named for long-time MIFA executive director Jon Fitzgerald, the trophy is awarded by a panel of secret adjudicators who determine which school demonstrates the most kindness, helpfulness, and inclusiveness over the course of the weekend as it pertains to their interactions with all of the weekend's participants.

Community comes together to grow special place for kids

Project shows the power of positive partnerships in UCS

What was once an overgrown garden area that had been overlooked has been transformed into something beautiful and beneficial for Burr Elementary.

Andrea Misho, Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) officer at Burr Elementary and co-advisor of Macomb Community College's Occupational Therapy Assistant Student Leadership Organization (MCCOTA), saw this overlooked space and knew the positive impact it would have on students with special needs.

"The Sensory Garden is an ever growing and changing component of the playground

that will benefit students for years to come," Misho said.

"The Sensory Garden serves a different purpose than a traditional playground," Burr Elementary Principal, Jeanne Poleski, said. "It supports all students including those whose senses may become easily overloaded on a traditional playground."

The Sensory Garden project has been led by the MCCOTA with friends, family and community putting in over 100 hours of work. Students from Girl Scouts Troop 77676 and clients and staff from the Therapeutic Rehabilitation and Vocational Training Centers also helped with the project.

Burr Elementary now provides a calming space for children and adults alike thanks to the help of nearly 30 volunteers, along with the input from students, such as Misho's daughter Ari who has autism and ADHD.

"Not only has the garden been a space my daughter enjoys being in, but she has also been vital in the testing of the items we've incorporated and has offered many ideas to the development of the garden," Misho said.

As Misho pointed out, the Sensory Garden offers a lot to invoke all the senses.

"Being able to interact with your peers promotes emotional regulation which many children with special needs require assistance with to further master," said Misho.



Celebrate Over 50 Years at

ROBERTS
Elementary School

Friday, May 19 5:30-7:30p.m.

Building Student Achievement.....continued from page 1

These proposals go hand and hand with our initiatives to improve student achievement by strengthening our curriculum and engaging families and students in the learning process.

Our community has a long legacy of supporting its schools. As we arrive at a crossroads of a proud past and a bright future, I know that our collaborative work will further define Utica Community Schools as an educational leader that empowers students to positively transform their lives and the future.

UCS Foundation Supports Excellence



Recipients of Chelsie Bemis Teacher Grants with UCS Foundation representatives

The UCS Foundation is proud to annually dedicate funds for the Chelsie Bemis Teacher Grant Program, designed to enhance student learning through a real-world experience consistent with UCS curricular goals.

“Each year the applications reflect the dedication and passion of UCS educators,” said Foundation President Sherman Abdo. “We appreciate the sponsors who give us the opportunity to support innovation in our district.”

This year the foundation supported the following programs and teachers:

- Digital Sleuths & Digital Designers, Rachel Krone of Shelby Junior High School
- IXL Independent Study/Small Group Math and Reading Curriculum Support, Emily Taubitz of UCS Virtual Academy
- Bringing Historical Heroes Alive in a Wax Museum, Melanie Braley of Messmore Elementary
- Emotional Regulation for Success, Stephanie Roy of Crissman Elementary

- REWARDS Reading Intervention, Danielle Price of Monfort Elementary
- Supporting Student Wellness Through Literature, Cheryl Boes of Beck Elementary
- Sketchbooks for Visual Note-taking & Ideations, Karen Borbolla/Inga Kamis of Morgan Elementary
- Multisensory Learning, Lynn Lantzy of Flickinger Elementary
- Switzer Sensory Pathway, Mary Beth Chinneck of Switzer Elementary
- Real World Math Using a 3D Printer, Roger White of Malow Junior High School
- Physics Fling, Teresa Kavanaugh of Dresden Elementary

Voices from the Community



Donald Bemis, Former UCS Superintendent with his granddaughter Kathryn Leathers, first grade teacher at Havel Elementary

The UCS Tradition of Excellence

“Community has always been at the front and center of this school district. I am proud of the legacy of success that has been the foundation of UCS and the continued commitment to future excellence.”



On the Value of a UCS Education

“Usually people move for career reasons, I moved to be part of Utica Community Schools. It has been everything I could have wished for and has exceeded my expectations.”

Sara Hakim, UCS Parent

Quality Schools and Regional Economic Strength



“The excellence of Utica Community Schools is a deciding factor for businesses seeking to invest in our community. The reputation of UCS as a destination district has brought new families to our community and is a key ingredient in the USPBL success story.”

Andy Appleby, Owner and CEO
United Shore Professional Baseball League

Strong Schools equal Strong Property Values



“Throughout my years of real estate, Utica Community Schools has always been increasing the interest of buyers for better education for their children and better communities for their homes. Along with the increased interest has been an increase in the value of homes in the district.”

Mark Connon, Real Estate Specialist



A Diploma that Open Doors

“The value of my diploma has opened up doors for me. I recognize that I had opportunities that are not available to graduates in other communities.”

Will Jenkins,
2021 UCS Graduate

Notice of Nondiscrimination

In compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Elliot-Larsen Civil Rights Act and the Persons with Disabilities Civil Rights Act, it is the policy of Utica Community Schools that no person shall, on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, sex, age, disability, height, weight, or marital status be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination during any instructional opportunities, programs, services, job placement assistance, employment or in policies governing student conduct and attendance. Any person suspecting a discriminatory practice should contact Utica Community Schools Human Resources at 11303 Greendale, Sterling Heights, MI 48312 or call (586) 797-1000.

www.UticaK12.org

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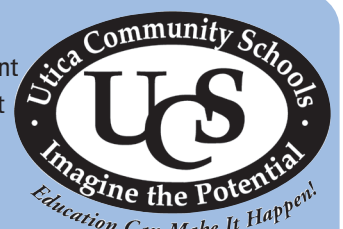


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FOCUS for the Community

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