

# FOCUS for the community



A Publication for the Residents of Utica Community Schools



**From the Superintendent...**  
Christine M. Johns, Ed.D.  
**Literacy is the foundation for college and career success**

The skills that our business community needs from its new employees have changed dramatically since the Great Recession.

Leading experts recognize that today's graduates need post-secondary experiences to be successful in college and career. Employers hiring in today's market seek out candidates who are innovative, flexible and have the ability to solve-problems.

One skill, however, has remained critical to business and industry leaders for new employees: the ability to effectively read, write and speak is essential in every career.

That is why literacy is at the center of teaching and learning in Utica Community Schools.

To succeed in social studies, students need to read critically and write in a clear manner. Our Career and Technical Education program requires students to work collaboratively and communicate with each other to meet the project goal. Mathematics requires students to not only have strong computation skills, but also be able to communicate effectively and apply concepts to real-world problems.

In Michigan, the importance of literacy has taken center stage with the passage of the Third Grade Reading Law, which requires districts to develop an individualized plan to ensure all students are proficient by the end of their third grade year.

In UCS, we continue to emphasize the importance of literacy and numeracy as a focus for post-secondary education.

A recent study by Georgetown University found that more than 95 percent of jobs created during the economic recovery have gone to workers with at least some college education - or 11.5 million of the 11.6 million jobs created since the Great Recession.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has expanded on this finding by projecting how manufacturing jobs are being restructured through automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI). It found that jobs being created in this field are now those that drive manufacturing - statisticians, mathematicians and software developers. Right in our back yard, automotive companies are leading the development of autonomous vehicles and the fundamental change that that will occur in mobility.

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## UCS partners with local libraries; provides all students free digital resources

All UCS K-12 students now have free digital access to a whole new digital world thanks to a virtual library card through their local libraries. Students and parents are also able to connect with a network of online tutors through Tutor.com.

"The virtual library card is an example of how local leaders continue to work together to enhance opportunities for our students," said Superintendent Dr. Christine Johns. "This partnership promotes an important focus on literacy by providing all students access to the digital resources offered at their local library."

Using a secure log-in and pin number, students are able to access resources such as eBooks, music and eMagazines. Students are also able to receive assistance from professional tutors from 4 to 11 p.m. seven days a week.

Utica Public Library Director, Marsha Doege, noted the academic strength of Utica Community Schools and a shared



L to r front: Melanie Davis, Marsha Doege, Faith Terenzi, Thom Dionne, Dr. Christine Johns, Gene Klida, Anne Kozlowski, Michael Nowicki. L to r back: Dana White, Stacy Lount, Tara Powrozek, Katherine Francis, Kathy Lootens, Nancy Brunetz, Gerard Pantano.

**The collaboration with UCS is a perfect partnership because we both want the same thing. We want children to succeed in school and in life. We want children to become lifelong learners, to reach for the stars and touch them. And we want children to have all the tools possible to do that.**

**Marsha Doege, Library Director, Utica Public Library**

community vision for the future have helped make the partnership possible.

"The collaboration with UCS is a perfect partnership because we both want the same thing," Doege said.

"We want children to succeed in

school and in life. We want children to dream, and to have the skills to realize those dreams. We want children

to become lifelong learners to retain their natural curiosity into adulthood, to reach for the stars and touch them. And we want children to have all the tools possible to do that." *Cont. on pg 3*

## District receives excellent audit rating

Utica Community Schools continues to meet the highest standards for its financial controls and accountability to taxpayers, according to auditors.

**The highest level of assurance we can provide is that the district's financial statements are fairly stated with an excellent rating.**

**Donna Hanson, CPA, Partner Plante Moran**

Donna Hanson, CPA and partner in the auditing firm of Plante Moran, said that for the 14th straight year,

Utica Community Schools officials received "the highest level of assurance we can provide that the district's financial statements are fairly stated with an excellent rating. The district has a sound budget process in place," Hanson said.

*Continued on page 2*

## Class of 2018 Graduation Ceremonies

**Henry Ford II Performing Arts Center**

**Utica Academy for International Studies**  
Tuesday, June 5 at 7:00 p.m.

**Alternative Learning Center and Adult Education**  
Thursday, June 7 at 7:00 p.m.

**DTE Energy Music Theatre**  
Saturday, June 9

**Henry Ford II High School at 9:00 a.m.**  
**Stevenson High School at 12:30 p.m.**  
**Utica High School at 4:00 p.m.**  
**Eisenhower High School at 7:30 p.m.**



## 2 FOCUS

### *More than 400 UCS students named Advanced Placement scholars*

The College Board, which administers Advanced Placement tests, has announced that 431 UCS students have received national scholar designations through the rigorous college-level Advanced Placement (AP) program.

“UCS is committed to providing all students access to college-level coursework that prepares them for successful post-secondary experiences,” superintendent Dr. Christine Johns said. The students were honored at the October 9 UCS Board of Education meeting.

AP courses, which are offered at secondary schools, give students the opportunity to earn credit or advanced standing at most of the nation’s colleges and universities.

Students must successfully pass a test administered by the College Board to earn the college credit. Students are graded on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest.

Honors earned by UCS students include:

- National Scholar status to six students who received an average score of at least 4 on all AP Exams taken, and scores of 4 or higher on eight or more of these exams.
- AP Scholar with Distinction status to 102 students who received an average score of at least 3.5 on all AP Exams taken, and scores of 3 or higher on five or more of these exams.
- AP Scholar with Honor status to 75 students who received an average score of at least 3.25 on all AP Exams taken, and scores of 3 or higher on four or more of these exams.
- AP Scholar status to 248 students who received scores of 3 or higher on three or more AP Exams.

In the 2016-2017 school year, 2,160 UCS students took a total of 3,680 AP exams. UCS currently offers 31 Advanced Placement courses.

### *District excellent audit rating*

*Continued from front page*

The firm awarded the district an “unmodified” opinion with no findings – which Hanson said illustrates the district has strong internal controls for its expenditures and meets all criteria for federal grants.

“This year’s audit reflects the Board of Education’s commitment to meet our high expectations for fiscal integrity,” said Board of Education President Gene Klida.

The 2016-2017 audit reported that the district finished with \$274 million in expenditures, with 81 percent of its costs directly supporting classroom instruction, including teachers, counselors and paraprofessionals.

This year, 21 percent of the district’s overall budget – or \$56.8 million – will go towards state-mandated retirement costs. This includes the State of Michigan’s contribution as restricted revenue to the retirement fund of \$19.3 million.

Overall, revenues for the school district are \$276.8 million, with 80 percent of the funding coming from the State of Michigan. This includes \$5.5 million in one-time revenue through the sale of land.

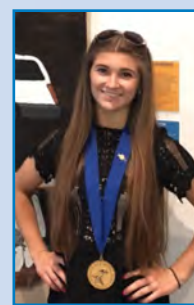
Despite the district’s work to meet high accounting and reporting standards, Hanson noted that the redirection of school funding by state lawmakers presents continued challenges to UCS.

## Points of Pride

### UCS artist among 100 students to earn national Scholastic Art honors

A Utica Community Schools senior has her art work on national display after she was recognized as being among the top 100 student artists through the Scholastic Art Competition.

Maria Chodnicki, of Eisenhower High School, is among only four Michigan students honored through the Art.Write.Now D.C. 2017 for her artistic accomplishments. Chodnicki’s mixed media piece is now on display at the U.S. Department of Education headquarters through July 31. The work will then join a year-long traveling art show that will be featured at venues in Oklahoma, New York, Kentucky and Ohio.



Maria Chodnicki

### 2017 Graduate is one of 1,200 in nation selected for air force academy



Elena Catallo

Utica High School 2017 graduate Elena Catallo is among only 1,200 of the nation’s seniors accepted in the U.S. Air Force Academy.

The academy is one of the most selective institutions in the nation, with only 17 percent of all applicants earning enrollment last year. The scholarship value of the selection is more than \$200,000 and graduates are immediately placed as an officer after completion. Catallo is the second Utica High graduate selected for admissions to a U.S. military academy this year. In the spring, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point selected 2017 graduate Gurjiwan Chahal, one of only 1,200 U.S. graduates to receive an appointment.

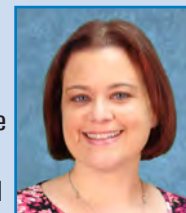
### Ten UCS seniors named among the nation’s top one percent of the Class of 2018

UCS Class of 2018 National Merit Semifinalists are: Daniel Capozello, Praveen Soundararajan and Anastasia Weiker, of Stevenson High School; Farah Affy and Moira Carrigan, of the Utica Academy for International Studies; Paul Kent and Mary Keta, of Utica High School; and Breanne Baumgartner, Anna Olson and Kaitlyn Proffitt, of Eisenhower High School. Baumgartner, Kent, Keta, Olson, Proffitt, Soundararajan and Weiker also attend the Utica Center for Mathematics, Science and Industry.

More than 1.7 million students of the Class of 2018 entered the National Merit Program by taking the 2016 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. The nationwide pool of semifinalists, representing less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors, includes the highest scoring entrants in each state.

### Utica Community Schools now has the top chef

Mandy Sosnowski, the Director of Food and Nutrition Services, has earned the 2017 Director of the Year Award from the School Nutrition Association of Michigan (SNAM). The award recognizes Sosnowski’s advocacy of child nutrition and commitment to provide all children access to healthy food options. She was also honored for her service to the SNAM. Sosnowski received her award at a special ceremony at the organization’s annual conference in October.



Mandy Sosnowski

### Bus driver Charles Weir has once again been honored for his commitment to safe transportation for students



Students congratulate Weir

Weir earned first place in Macomb County – and top ten in the State of Michigan – in the annual Michigan School Bus Driving Championship, sponsored by the Michigan Association of Pupil Transportation.

The competition tests a driver on bus operations, procedures, and the Motor Vehicle Code. Drivers are also rated on judgement, reaction and response to real-world simulations. Weir also participated in the wheel driving skills rodeo. Last year, Weir was named among the top four drivers and “Rookie of the Year” at the state competition.

**SAVE THE DATE**  
Thursday, February 8, 2018



**Henry Ford II High School**  
11911 Clinton River Road  
Sterling Heights  
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.



## UCS bands earn superior honors from regional judges



All four UCS high school bands have taken top honors at a recent regional competition.

Eisenhower, Henry Ford II, Utica and Stevenson bands received the top Division 1 ratings from judges at the annual Michigan School Band & Orchestra Association (MSBOA) District 16 Marching Band Festival on October 11.

The bands earned honors for their half-time shows:

**Chieftain Marching Band:**

A Night On Broadway

**Falcon Marching Band:**

Welcome To The Jungle

**Eagle Marching Band:**

2016: In Memoriam

**Titan Marching Band:**

Wizards & Magic

More than 1,300 students from Macomb and Oakland Counties performed at the festival.

Each school's performance was graded by three judges, one each for music, marching, and general effect.

## Career and Technical Education students earn national recognition

Utica Community Schools students earned top awards at a recent international medical careers competition, including a first place finish and a school "threepeat" performance.

Students from Stevenson High School, Henry Ford II High School and the Utica Academy for International Studies earned top honors at the Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA) International Conference held in late June in Orlando, Florida.

Utica Academy for International Studies 2017 graduate Anthony Neubacher was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship after placing first in Medical Terminology, a competition that tests knowledge and application of terms common to health care professionals and specialists.

At Stevenson High School, 2017 graduate Alyssa Polizzi placed third in a Veterinary Science tournament for the school's third, unprecedented consecutive appearance on the stage of international competition. She had

previously earned a \$1,000 scholarship from the organization.

HOSA-Future Health Professionals is an international student organization that promotes career opportunities in the health care industry.

Other top ten finishes by UCS students at the June 20 through 23 leadership conference include:

- Henry Ford II High School team earned a sixth place finish in the Health Education competition. The team was comprised of Aimee Nambiatthusseril, Carley Kilgore and Merin Babu.

• 2017 Stevenson High School graduate

Alyssa Baginski placed tenth in the Nursing Assisting event, the school's first Nursing Assisting competitor to reach the stage at the international competition. Utica Academy for International Studies senior Rachel Stieber placed in the top ten in the Medical Reading event at the competition.

**Senior project drives success**

Since her graduation in June, a senior

project for the Utica Center for Science and Industry has driven a lot of success for Brooke Sasinowski.

Sasinowski, a 2017 graduate of Henry Ford II High School, created two model cars that she built using a 3D printer - one of which was operational.

She said the project has gathered a great deal of attention for her and has created new opportunities.

Sasinowski currently has an ongoing internship at Intrepid Control Systems where

she designs mechanical cases for vehicle spy products.

She is currently attending Oakland University for Industrial Engineering and working with a business partner to create a 3D printing company that remanufactures vintage remote control car parts.

Her senior project has been featured in a National Magazine - RC Car Action - and she was interviewed at a model car racing event.



Alyssa Polizzi



Brooke Sasinowski

## Virtual Library Card partnership

Continued from front page

Local community leaders also applauded the partnership.

"The Sterling Heights library has a strong community presence and we are happy to collaborate with our local schools to get important resources to all students," commented Sterling Heights Mayor Michael Taylor.

"The Virtual Library Card will create even more excitement for our younger readers about the wealth of information available through their public library," said Janet Dunn, Macomb Township Supervisor and Trustee of the Friends of Clinton-Macomb Public Library.

"Our community is pleased with the high level of educational services offered through UCS, and we are proud to work together with them to develop a strong foundation in literacy," Shelby Township Supervisor Richard Stathakis said.

"The close working relationship we have with Utica Community Schools continues to offer new opportunities for our students," Utica Mayor Thom Dionne said.



Oakbrook second grader, Clara Taylor, demonstrates how to download a children's book.



## Community partnerships support College Culture



Left to right: Raymond Lope, Joseph Elliott, Ken Krolyczyk, Gene Klida, Dr. Christine Johns, Robert Van Camp, Michele Templeton, Jennifer Prybys, Denyeal Nesovski, Susan Rosso, Karen Borbolla and Josephine Braun

Two community partners are supporting the Utica Community Schools College Culture by donating a collective \$46,000 to the Superintendent's Scholarship program.

The UCS Foundation for Educational Excellence recently contributed \$35,000 and local business, Toggled, contributed \$11,000 to benefit the UCS Class of 2018.

"These scholarship donations demonstrate again how our community supports our students in their college and career dreams," superintendent Dr. Johns said.

"Thanks to our partners, UCS students will continue to have doors open to them as they successfully pursue critical post-secondary experiences."

This is the ninth straight year the foundation has supported the

scholarship program, made possible by its Evening of Excellence fundraiser.

"The UCS Foundation is proud to support the Superintendent's Scholarship Program and the district's focus that every graduate successfully pursues post-secondary educational experiences," said Foundation president Robert Van Camp.

This is the second straight year that the Michigan-based company, Toggled, is supporting scholarships in recognition of every home run hit at Jimmy John's Field. Toggled supports the UCS Superintendent's Scholarship Program through its 2017 Brightest Lights Home Run Challenge to benefit UCS graduates pursuing careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

The scholarship donation was announced at the September 10 championship game and season finale at the field in Utica.

Andy Appleby, USPBL founder and president and chief executive officer of General Sports and Entertainment, said he was proud of the league's support of more than 700 local charities.

"We are especially proud that we have such a solid relationship with Utica Community Schools, and that our collaborative efforts continue to support the families and students who have made our second season so successful," Appleby said.

Applications for the scholarship program, which is open to all seniors, will be available in December.

"Toggled is proud to support UCS and the United Shore Professional Baseball League (USPBL)," said Toggled marketing director Rob Schmitz. "Through community efforts like this we hope to further fuel student interest in STEM related education as well as future careers within the discipline."

## Literacy is the foundation for college/career success

*Continued from front page*

To ensure our students have a competitive advantage for these jobs, we are creating the skills necessary for post-secondary success – starting with a strong foundation in literacy.

UCS promotes not only the key literacy concepts - phonics, phonetic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, writing and fluency – but also the type of literacy that will allow students to be successful in jobs that require highly skilled, high-tech employees.

As the first Michigan district to partner with Code.org and the College Board, UCS is creating a K-12

pathway for students to pursue computer-related careers.

Code.org and College Board partnerships, along with the virtual library card featured in this newsletter, illustrate how we continue to prepare students for the restructured job market in a technology driven world.

These partnerships are examples of how UCS continues to build a strong foundation that will open doors for our graduates and help them build success in a world of rapid change.

## UCS District Calendar 2017-2018

### November 16

Parent Conferences  
Elementary Half Day

### November 22

Thanksgiving Break Begins  
No School

### November 27

School Resumes

### December 25

Winter Break Begins  
No School

### January 3

School Resumes

### January 15

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day  
No School

### January 24

Secondary Exams  
Elementary Full Day  
Secondary Half Day

### January 25

Secondary Exams  
All Students Half Day

### January 26

Secondary Exams  
All Students Half Day

### February 19

Mid-Winter Break Begins  
No School

### February 26

School Resumes

### March 30

Good Friday  
No School

### April 2

Spring Break Begins  
No School

### April 9

School Resumes

### April 13

Elementary Half Day  
Secondary Full Day

### May 28

Memorial Day  
No School

### June 13

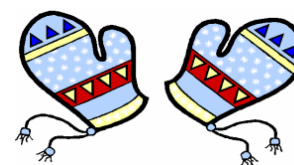
Secondary Exams  
Elementary Full Day  
Secondary Half Day

### June 14

Secondary Exams  
All Students Half Day

### June 15

Last Day of School  
Secondary Exams  
All Students Half Day



## Students Give Back to the Community

- Utica Community Schools students are supporting nearly 200 charitable organizations during this holiday season.
- Each UCS school is hosting multiple activities to assist local families in need. Charity drives include such things as Toys for Tots, Hat and Mitten Trees, Can Food Drives and local "Adopt a Family" programs.
- Contact your local school if you would like to help support their charitable activities this holiday season.

### 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 the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources at Utica Community Schools, 11303 Greendale, Sterling Heights, MI 48312 or call (586) 797-1000.

[www.uticak12.org](http://www.uticak12.org)

Find updates from Utica Community Schools on:



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Christine M. Johns, Ed.D.  
*Superintendent*



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**FOCUS for the Community**

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