From the Superintendent...
Christine M. Johns, Ed.D.

Giving Thanks

At 2018 nears its end, we look forward to the upcoming holidays and special gatherings with family and friends. Traditionally many of us reflect back on the year in review and give thanks for the gifts we have received, including gifts of support, from those around us.

With this in mind, I would like to share the appreciation of the entire district to our residents for the care and confidence that underlined the successful passage of our recent safety and security bond proposal.

Community was at the heart of the bond proposal from the start. Parents and residents alike came forward with their concerns for the safety and security of our children. Our Board of Education's swift and unanimous action placed the matter before voters this fall.

Already our district is moving forward on the projects identified. We are currently developing timelines, specifications and bid documents to make these projects a reality. We anticipate issuing bonds after the first of the year.

Shortly, we will be sharing additional information on the specific improvements so that taxpayers can see that our district will continue to be a strong fiscal steward of the investment they make in their schools.

Our community's support reflects a long legacy of residents working together to build stronger schools and neighborhoods. It is this commitment to service, and to each other, that we continue to nurture every day in our classrooms.

This season alone, there are hundreds of community service projects happening at schools throughout the district to support those in need. The array of drives being held at our schools mirrors the diversity within them.

The next generation of givers are embracing these efforts and demonstrating the same level of care and commitment they see modeled by the adults in our community every day. It is another important way that we continue to build upon the legacy of excellence that defines UCS.

Thank you again for your continued support of our students. We look forward to the New Year ahead and building upon the heritage and legacy that is Utica Community Schools. Best wishes to you and yours for a safe and healthy holiday season.

Whether it is spreading holiday cheer, collecting food items, securing toy donations or making sure neighbors stay warm this winter, UCS students are showing their extraordinary compassion in big ways. Students from all 36 schools are involved in charitable giving this holiday season to more than 200 separate service projects.

Giving back to its community is a noteworthy UCS tradition that thousands of its students have embraced throughout the years. Current student council president at West Utica Elementary, Ashley Mathews, said it best, “If you are involved in the community, then other people would want to do it with you. It makes our community a better place to be.”

Here is just a sampling of the good tidings occurring daily in our schools: Burt Elementary Bull Dogs in Sterling Heights are committed to community outreach. In November, students raised $1,002.47 for Pennies for Pasta. Later this month, the Bull Dogs will be caroling at the Oakmont Sterling Senior Community. Also in Sterling Heights, student council members at Collins Elementary are busy sorting through hundreds of donations that students have brought in for the Kiwanis Canned Food Drive.

At Henry Ford II High School, Ford Key Club students along with Key Clubbers from Stevenson, Eisenhower, Utica and UAIS, in all 78 students came together to make 31 blankets for patients at the Children’s Hospital of Detroit using supplies donated by Utica - Shelby Kiwanis.

Over in Shelby Township at Duncan Elementary, the DC2 (Duncan Community Crew) is preparing goody-filled shoe boxes for the Samaritan Purse International Relief organization. During December, Duncan students will also be taking part in Moonbeams for Sweet Dreams for the pediatric department of Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak.

Giving back to the community is also important to students at Ebeling Elementary in Macomb Township. They are busily decorating a giant Christmas tree with brand new pairs of mittens, warm winter hats and socks they have collected. Four miles to the west in Shelby Township, Wiley Elementary’s student council worked with the Shelby Lions to collect nearly 500 canned foods.

From every corner of the UCS community, east, west, north and south, students are giving from their heart and caring for their friends and neighbors near and far. Service is truly a lesson these incredibly selfless young people teach us all year long. On behalf of UCS students, happy holidays!
“Math Talk” will add up to improve student engagement

To continue its focus on math instruction, elementary teachers will be introducing “Math Talk” as a way to engage students more actively in their learning.

Math Talk is part of a new mathematics series - Math Expressions – that was introduced at UCS elementary schools this year.

Through Math Talk, student will discuss the process they are using to find solutions to math problems with their teacher, one-on-one or in their class.

By discussing their solutions, students take a greater responsibility for solving problems and create a better understanding of the process used to find answers.

Math Expressions is a comprehensive research-based mathematics program that addresses the rigor of all Michigan Academic Standards and the eight Mathematical Practices.

This series integrates student inquiry, discussions focusing on mathematical thinking, hands-on learning and problem solving, as well as the pairing of modeled examples.

Math Expressions provides students skills through experiences that create understanding using models, discussion, exploration, inquiry, and guided instruction.

Next Generation Science:
Creating a greater connection for students

The district is beginning to introduce a new approach to science instruction that creates greater connections for students in how they approach the subject.

The changes, now underway at the junior high level, are designed to move student learning to a greater understanding of how the concepts connect to each other in all areas of science: physical science, life science, earth and space science and engineering.

Through Next Generation Science standards, students are experiencing:
• Greater conversations about the strength of evidence that is used to draw conclusions
• The importance of using multiple sources and summarizing the arguments
• The use of Multi-media presentations to give students the ability to articulate
• Making science accessible to all students and that all are able to engage in science and engineering practices.

Coding and programming lessons take place at every grade level

“I have learned that coding is very fun,” said Beck Elementary fourth grader Evangelos Karasaevas. “And when I grow up, I want to do this.”

Utica Community Schools was one of the first districts to partner with national Code.org to expand opportunities through integration of coding in elementary media centers, the creation of exploratory courses at the junior high school, expanded computer sciences courses at high school as well as the integration of coding principles in Algebra 1 programs. Teachers also focus on ensuring all students have access to coding experiences.

Media Center teachers recently received a $40,000 grant from The Community Telecommunications Network to create a mobile learning unit that provides coding resources – iPads, robots, and programming kits - that can travel between all 25 UCS elementary schools.

Meanwhile, UCS students joined their peers in more than 180 countries by recognizing the Hour of Code and computer science week.

Students also took part in “unplugged” activities such as creating algorithms for robots, learning graph paper programming using a Twister board, and making paper airplanes following an algorithm.

While students call the coding activities “a lot of fun,” they also understand what coding means and why it is important.

“Coding is when you put in different directions into a program to make the computer do different things,” Beck fourth-grader Addison Daniels. “For example, when the designers of the computers put in all of these 0s and 1s they are telling the computer to do different things. When you are searching something on Google, it can sort out the different files that can give you the links that you want.”

Unique career event allows hands-on opportunities for students to explore careers

Nearly 400 Utica Community Schools junior high school students recently rolled up their sleeves to explore their future careers.

The students took part in a unique hands-on career exploration event called MiCareerQuest Southeast, the region’s largest interactive career exploration event featuring more than 100 area companies.

“I liked that the field trip was very hands-on and interactive,” said Jeannette eighth grader Allison Felice. “We didn’t just have to listen to someone speak; we got to actually try out the jobs.”

The goal, according to UCS teachers, was to give students a new way to experience their career interests and help link the future workforce to business and industry.

“In Appreciation UCS Board of Education
Thank you for your dedication to the students of our community.

Attention Graduating Seniors: The 2019 Superintendent’s Scholarship program is now open and accepting applications. Visit www.uticak12.org/SuperintendentScholarship for details.
Points of Pride

Band earns prestigious invitation to music conference
For the second straight year, a Utica Community Schools music group has been selected to perform at a prestigious gathering of statewide educators.

The Eisenhower High School Wind Ensemble is one of five Michigan high school bands selected to perform at the 2019 Michigan Music Conference in Grand Rapids. In 2018, the Malow Junior High School Jazz Band was selected to perform at the conference.

The 50-member ensemble will perform 45 minutes of music on January 25, 2019 at DeVos Hall, home of the Grand Rapids Symphony. Guest conductors and a professional solo artist performing a concerto will be joining the band. The wind ensemble is under the direction of Eisenhower music teacher Christopher Traskal.

Student newspaper named among nation’s best
For the fourth time in five years, Utica High School’s Arrow newspaper has earned one of scholastic journalism’s highest honors by the Columbia Scholastic Press Association.

The student publication was named a Crown Award finalist in print news for 2019, and will receive either a Gold or Silver Crown Award during CSPA’s annual Spring Scholastic Convention.

Crown Awards are the highest recognition given by the CSPA to a student print or digital medium for overall excellence. In the nationwide competition, the Arrow was one of only 30 student newspapers – and one of only two in Michigan - to win the award for print news. The advisor is Stacy Smale.

Art and physics play a role in new curriculum
A group of Henry Ford II students are riding a wave of popularity for recreational sports by becoming one of the first national high schools to link wood working to water boards.

Based on work by a northern Michigan company Little Bay Boards in Petoskey, students at Henry Ford II are bringing their skills and materials in their wood trades course to create paddle boards – typically made from foam.

CTE instructor Christopher Davis recently worked with the company this summer to integrate the board curriculum into the wood working program. Recently, the students raised $1,500 by auctioning one of their creations to benefit KnowResolve – a organization for teenagers.

Watch D.O.G.S. on guard for student success
As a dad with a flexible schedule, Dresden Elementary parent Larry Gambotto knows he is lucky that he can spend time at his fifth grade twin’s elementary school. “When I walk in, the students know who I am and they just light up,” he said.

Gambotto also knows his presence – an adult male – is unique and sends an important message to the students. “I think it is massively important to have that father figure,” he said.

Dresden Elementary staff members agree, and to encourage more dads, grandfathers and uncles to spend time at their local school, they have started a Watch D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students) chapter at their school – a first for Utica Community Schools.

UCS wins big at annual Lego Robotics ThunderQuest tournament
UCS teams took home nearly all of the honors awarded at the tournament, including five first-place awards and the overall Champions Award given to a team from Harvey and Dresden Elementary School - Rockin’ Bots.

Other UCS teams qualifying for the state tournament include Tuxedo Purr-ites Meowt into Space, from Switzer Elementary; Rocket Robots, of Morgan Elementary; and Dynamic Duncan Doers, of Duncan Elementary.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) academy received $1.2 million donation from private donor

The Stevenson Manufacturing, Automation and Design Engineering (MADE) academy, which opened this year, has received a private contribution based on the district’s proven history of effectively bridging the gap between student skills and industry needs.

The donor – who requested to remain anonymous – specifically targeted accelerating the opportunity for students by funding start-up costs, professional learning opportunities for teachers and fabrication and manufacturing equipment that provide students industry-level experiences. The donation also funded equipment for the fabrication program, including a plasma cutter along with vertical and horizontal saws.

Collaborative efforts bring enhancements to district’s security initiatives
Utica Community Schools and its area law enforcement partners have announced a series of new safety procedures and protocols as part of their ongoing security program.

“Our strong partnership with local and county law enforcement agencies continues to have a positive impact on the safety and security of our students and staff,” Superintendent Dr. Christine Johns said. “Through our continued discussions and review of the best practices, our team works collaboratively to implement initiatives that impact both the learning environment and the overall health and well-being of our students.”

“While we have always had an excellent relationship with our schools, our departments have never been more connected to our schools,” said Sterling Heights Police Chief Dale Dwojakowski.

“We have safe schools,” said Shelby Township Police Chief Robert Sheldie. “Our communities have high expectations that we are focused on school safety and security. Through our collaborative efforts, we are meeting those expectations and ensuring we are doing everything possible to protect the learning environment of our valued educators and children.”

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The collaborative efforts have resulted in a series of recent initiatives focused on student safety and well-being.

With the recent passage of the $155 million Safety and Security Bond Proposal approved by voters on November 6, district officials are moving forward with a series of facility improvements.

The improvements include expanding the use of camera systems in UCS schools, which provides law enforcement access to the technology during emergency situations. The improvements also provide a focus on secure entry areas. Bonds will be issued after the new calendar year and projects are scheduled to begin in the spring. A timeline for the improvements will be featured on UCS and individual school websites in January.

In addition to facility improvements, all sixth graders this year are taking part for the first time in programs through local police departments that address bullying, healthy relationships, substance abuse and responsible use of digital devices.

The first set of sixth graders are graduating from Sterling Heights schools this month in the Skills Mastery and Resistance Training (SMART) Moves program. UCS students in Shelby Township, Macomb Township and Utica will receive Drug Abuse Resistance...
Elementary schools host Kindergarten Open House on March 13

Utica Community Schools will be hosting its annual open house on March 13 to begin the registration for students entering kindergarten in the fall of 2019. All 25 UCS elementary schools will hold an open house for new kindergarten students at 7:00 p.m.

At the open house, parents will have the opportunity to learn about the district’s curriculum, meet the teachers and building staff and submit school registration forms.

UCS offers students full-day comprehensive instruction in core academic areas of English Language Arts, reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies.

In addition, UCS offers a personalized blended learning program at the early elementary level that allows teachers to use technology – iPads, laptops and SMART boards – to support an environment based on each student’s learning style and pace. The program has been honored at national and state levels for its innovation and impact on learning.

Children are eligible for kindergarten if they turn five years old on or before September 1, 2019. However, children who turn five between September 1 and December 1, 2019 are eligible to enroll in kindergarten if their parents submit a waiver form.

For more information, please visit: www.uticak12.org/2019kindergarten

Items Necessary for Registration

☑ An original birth certificate or certified copy, with raised seal, issued by the clerk of the county where your child was born or the health department in the birth state;

☑ Your child’s health immunization record, including vision and hearing screenings. Be sure to schedule immunization updates early, these appointments are often limited;

☑ Photo I.D. (Driver’s license or work photo I.D.)

☑ Proof of residency, such as property tax bill, closing papers or lease agreement. Please know that we are not able to accept utility bills.

Security initiatives

Continued from page 3

Education (D.A.R.E.) this spring through the Shelby Township Police Department and the Macomb County Sheriff’s Department.

At high schools, an ID card system for students is being introduced this month. The cards readily identify students who attend the school and it will mirror colleges and workplaces that issue ID cards as part of their protocols.

SAVE THE DATE: February 7, 2019

Utica Community Schools 12th annual ACADEMIC BLITZ

Thursday, FEB. 7, 2019 at Henry Ford II High School

Information booths open at 6 p.m., BLITZ runs from 6-9 p.m.

Students in grades 5th through 11th, parents and staff are invited to this free event. Learn about secondary academic courses, clubs and specialty programs. Visit uticak12.org/academicblitz

Start your Game Plan NOW for success in high school and beyond!

www.uticak12.org

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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.

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