

“Did you know...”

Article By Board President – Ron Frye

The 2022-23 school year is off to a great start! What a year it has been from a 3rd place National FFA team award to the substantial Irish Pride witnessed throughout the community as a result of our football season! The Seneca High School Board of Education has successfully navigated a pandemic, responsibly prepared for a needed gymnasium addition, and proudly overseen growth in many areas of our district. The Board has long appreciated the support of the community in its efforts and I am pleased to share some exciting information about our district in the form of, “Did you know...?”.

Did you know that Seneca High School has recently made great strides to attend to student’s emotional and physical well-being? SHS added a social worker to work with our students social and emotional health needs and an athletic trainer to focus on student-athlete injury prevention. Both Mrs. Samantha Leake (social worker) and Mr. Christopher Jackson (athletic trainer) have been great blessings to our students and assets to the district. From these unique positions to the professional development of our faculty and staff, Seneca High School is growing.

Did you know that Seneca High School students can graduate with almost two full years of junior college credit? Students at SHS are able to earn college credit in both our General Education and Career Technical Education programs. An additional source of Irish Pride is when the school board learns of the impact that our dual credit programs have on our graduates. Recently, a mother shared that her freshman daughter at the University of Illinois was able to register as a junior because of all the great college credit opportunities Seneca High School provided her daughter. The development of the dual credit programs at SHS was a key Board of Education supported effort to enhance the student offerings in our district.

Did you know that Seneca High School has made great energy savings improvements recently? From self-performing all LED light retrofitting throughout the entire district, to major upgrades at the West Campus, our district has greatly improved its ability to be energy efficient. Additionally, the district has upgraded several operational units such as HVAC equipment to continue to promote long-term strategic savings. The West Campus, or old High School, has hosted blood drives, weekly meetings of a community church youth group, and an adult Co-Ed volleyball league. In addition, many area youth sports teams use our West Campus facilities on evenings and weekends for athletic practices.

Did you know that the planning and preparation of the gymnasium addition project has been years in the making? Several years ago, the Board prudently created a Capital Project Fund to begin saving for the addition. As savings grew, the process continued with monthly coordinated meetings with architects and construction managers and three successful community forums to engage the community in an open and honest fashion. Proudly, the district will be able to pay for the gym addition using operating funds and no property tax bonds will be issued. Finally, the administration maintains a “gym addition blog” on our website and will continue to provide updates during the project’s construction for anyone interested in learning more.

On behalf of the Board of Education, we are proud of the efforts of all stakeholders involved in the growth of Seneca High School. From engaging student’s needs to professional development of our faculty, to our addition project, we are excited about our district’s growth and its future. I hope you enjoyed this “Did you know section?” and we hope everyone has a wonderful holiday season.

Sincerely,

Ron Frye
President

Tidbits of Information on our Seneca High School Board Members

Joe Johnson, Board Member—Joe has served on the Seneca High School Board of Education for the past 18 years. He also holds a position on the following two Committees: Building, Grounds & Transportation & Discipline. Joe started working the family farm back when he was 8 years old. He is currently self-employed as a farmer marking 53 years working in the farming industry. He is also a member of the Brookfield Township District and works for Kinsman Mutual. Seneca High School has had three generations of “Johnsons” go through its doors. Joe stated, “My Grandpa, C. Warren Johnson, also held a position on the Seneca High School Board back as early as 1950.”

Rich Hamilton, Secretary—Rich has served on the Seneca High School Board of Education for the past 13 years. He also holds a position on the following three Committees: Curriculum, Finance & Personnel, and Policy. Rich is the Operations Manager for CHS. His wife’s name is Julie and together they have raised three children Daniel, Natalie, and John, all graduates of SHS. Rich “working together with the Administration and teachers to allow our kids to have so many opportunities for education and athletics.

Ron Frye, President—Ron has served on the Seneca High School Board of Education for the past 12 years. He also holds a position on the following six Committees: Building, Ground & Transportation, Co-Curricular, Curriculum, Discipline, Finance & Personnel, and Policy. Ron is self-employed as a farmer for 43 years. His wife of 36 years is Jennifer. They have raised 4 children, Erica, Ryan, David all SHS graduates. Addison is currently a sophomore at SHS. Ron also has four siblings that are SHS graduates, as well as, his father being a graduate of the Class of 1949.

Sara Olson, Vice President—Sara has served on the Seneca High School Board of Education for the past 12 years. She also holds a position on the following three Committees: Co-Curricular, Curriculum, and Policy. Sara herself is a teacher of 22 years, the last 21 years have been for Nettle Creek as a 3rd Grade Teacher. Her partner’s name is Jenn Zelko. She has two daughters, Addie, SHS Class of 2021 and Lainie SHS Class of 2025. Sara says, “As a former graduate of SHS Class of 1996 I am Irish through and through! For the first 10 years of my time on the board I was the only woman and elementary school teacher on the Board. I love being a part of the behind the scenes of what makes SHS amazing! I have been a part of making Seneca High School transparent and I feel like the school has an amazing climate with endless opportunities that continue to increase for our student population.”

Jason Eltrevoog, Board Member—Jason has served on the Seneca High School Board of Education for the past 6 years. He also holds a position on the following three Committees: Policy, Curriculum, and Finance & Personnel. Jason is a math professor at Joliet Junior College. Jason is a 1990 graduate of SHS and his wife’s name is Marla. Together they have raised 3 children Emily, Eli, & Addison, all graduates of SHS. Jason states, “I have enjoyed learning everything that goes into running a school and making it a great place for our kids...oh, and the awesome cookies, of course.”

Cory Yandell, Board Member—Cory has served on the Seneca High School Board of Education for the past 6 years. He also holds a position on the following three Committees: Building, Grounds, & Transportation, Co-Curricular, and Policy. Cory is employed by the Seneca Grade School, 6th grade ELA. Cory is married to Suzanne Yandell (Provance). According to Cory, it’s “The free cookies!!! :) Just kidding, I enjoy seeing all of my former students growing into young adults and finding success in the academic, extracurriculars, and athletics that they choose to pursue. I enjoy the idea that I have helped play a small role in providing them all of the great opportunities that we have here at SHS. With my own children not yet at the high school, it helps me to feel connected to the high school environment.”

Tiffany Biros, Board Member—Tiffany has served on the Seneca High School Board of Education for the past 2.5 years. She also holds a position on the following 2 Committees: Discipline & Policy. Tiffany is employed by the Newark Healthcare Center of Morris Hospital as a Patient Service Representative. Tiffany’s husband, Scott, Class of 1991, son, Case, Class of 2022, and daughter, Kate, is a current Junior here at SHS. Tiffany says, “I enjoy working as a collaborative board, along with great administrators, to bring the best education and experiences to the students of Seneca High School.”

Welcome everyone...
From the Desk of SHS Principal, Mr. Mike Coughlin

It seems late, because quite a few of these faces have been at SHS since the beginning of August or earlier. However, we want to wish a big welcome to all our new school employees for the 22 – 23 school year. We are excited to be able to work alongside them for the betterment of all SHS students. It can be a little stressful to be the “new kid at school,” but this group has been doing a great job. When you see any of these faces, please congratulate them on their new position and help us send them an IRISH PRIDE welcome. Welcome to SHS!!

New Employees: Jim Harsted – Maintenance Director, Allison Griffin – Transportation/Cafeteria, Samantha Leake – Social Worker, Jessica Applebee – Cafeteria, Cally Diss – Ag Teacher, Christopher Jackson – Athletic Trainer/Maintenance, Mitch Miller, Ag Teacher, Luri Maier – Lorntz – Security Monitor, Nikki Bricco – Main Office Secretary, and Matt Houchin – Special Education Aide.

“The Road to Success is Always Under Construction.”
Message from Superintendent, Dr. Dan Stecken

Over the past two years, previous newsletters have highlighted the work that the Board of Education and Administration has undertaken in preparation for our gymnasium addition project. In the Spring of 2022, I shared an update on our progress. Since that time, our gym planning group, consisting of Board of Education members, community members, administration, and other key stakeholders, has completed the third phase, “Construction Documents.”

On August 16 2022, we held our 2nd community forum series to discuss project developments and updates. While inflationary times have impacted our planning, the district has worked diligently to prepare financially and responsibly for our project. On Tuesday November 1st, we held our bid openings and benefitted from a highly competitive process with many contractors bidding on our project. Through the guidance of our construction manager, Shales McNutt Inc., and our architects at Wold Architects & Engineers, we were excited to witness the fruits of the competitive environment. On Wednesday November 16th, the Board of Education of Seneca High School approved the bids with a 7-0 vote. We will break ground in the Spring of 2023 for our gymnasium addition with a hopeful 12-month construction timeline.

As you may recall from that last writing and our community forum, the Board of

Education has been planning and saving for this needed project for several years, building its “Capital Projects” fund balance over \$7 million. The district will pay the remainder of the project balance from non-taxable debt certificates and from operating fund balances. Again, this means there will be no bonding and no increase in the property tax rate. As a matter of fact, with a December levy approval, the taxpayers of Seneca High School District 160 will see a property tax rate deduction from District 160 (See Fiscal Services Director Mrs. Stacey Gould’s newsletter). When we first set out to begin this construction project, we established goals, engaging the community in the Summer of 2021 with guiding principles. Our goals have not changed in our committee’s work and the entire process has been an exciting moment of IRISH PRIDE. Those previously established and current goals include:

The Guiding Principles of the Committee’s Work:

- Community pride in our completed end product.
- Multi-use facility beyond “just a gym.”
- More family friendly; eliminating early morning and late evening practices.
- Tournament facility with the ability to host large venues and multi-team events.
- Engage the community in a transparent fashion.
- Increased community access to the West Campus.

As our work has continued, I am excited to share some of our updated gymnasium photos here. You will note that the Committee wanted the building addition to blend in with the existing structure as much as possible, taking great pride in our building. Additionally, the Committee wanted a main “Competition Court” with auxiliary courts to maximize practice space to continue to be a family-friendly district. The gymnasium also features a 2-lane sprint track for our successful Strength & Conditioning classes (see Mr. Dan Baker’s newsletter article) to accompany our weight room and well utilized outside track. Additionally, the current balcony of the main gymnasium will be converted to a batting cage area to be used by our softball, baseball, golf, physical education classes, and strength & conditioning programs. Finally, being roughly three years into the planning of this project, I wanted to remind our taxpayers that our website features a “Gym Blog” that has early plans, pictures, and will offer ongoing progress photos and meeting notes to make the process as transparent and community engaging as possible. This project is an exciting phase in the growth of our district, one that our students, employees, and community can be extremely proud of, continuing our efforts along The Seneca Way with great IRISH PRIDE!

The Educational Foundation of Seneca High School Gymnasium Addition Door Wall

An exciting addition to our gymnasium project will be a “Donor Wall” for our community members to display their IRISH PRIDE. All proceeds from the “donor bricks” will go to the Educational Foundation of Seneca High School, which donates scholarship money to Seneca High School Student Graduates.

Pay tribute to a loved one or show your family's Irish pride by memorializing one of the "donor bricks" in the new gymnasium addition donor wall. This donor wall will be located inside the current atrium and eventual entrance to the new gymnasium. Construction will begin in the FY 22-23 school year, continue in the FY 23-24 school year, with occupancy in the summer of 2024. The wall will be "unveiled" in a community ceremony during the fall of 2024. All monies raised will be held by the Educational Foundation of Seneca High School to be utilized for college or trade school scholarships for Seneca High School graduates. None of the monies donated will be used for any construction expenses.

Direct Link: <https://seneca.revtrak.net/irish-pride-brick-donor-wall-/#/list> Start Date: Available Now—End Date: None

Irish Pride Brick Order Form

Buy an Educational Foundation of Seneca High School Irish Pride Brick Today!

Support the Educational Foundation of Seneca High School

The Educational Foundation of Seneca High School secures and channels private funds to enhance educational programs and opportunities for SHS students. The Foundation raises funds for post-graduate academic and career technical education scholarships.

Join hundreds of students, graduates, athletes, teachers, and families by supporting the Educational Foundation of Seneca High School. Your donation will benefit Seneca High School students and graduates for years to come, all while immortalizing your loved one, family, and Irish Pride in our new gymnasium addition.

Order Form

[] I would like to purchase a commemorative Irish Pride brick for \$100. If one would like to purchase multiple bricks in the same family/household, a \$25/brick discount is available.

Brick Inscription:

(Limit 14 characters per line including spaces – please print clearly to ensure accuracy)

I am interested in giving a larger gift to the Educational Foundation of Seneca High School.

Please contact me to discuss how I can help enhance the educational opportunities for the students.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Best Time to Call: _____

**Make your check payable to:
Educational Foundation of Seneca High School
307 East Scott St.
Seneca, IL 61360**

From the Desk of Fiscal Service Director, Stacey Gould

The start of the fall in the business office marks the time of year for two of the most important items on the to-do list: approving the budget and presenting the tax levy. Every year, schools throughout the state of Illinois, including Seneca High School, present their tax levy at the December Board of Education meeting. This past year marked the end of a two-year extension of an original seven-year agreement with Exelon, now known as Constellation, on the valuation of the LaSalle Station. Within this agreement, the taxable value of LaSalle Station was agreed upon at \$460 million, as well as the pledge to maintain a constant tax rate of \$1.74848 for all district taxpayers. For the original seven years of the agreement, Seneca High School had a property tax rate of \$1.79838, lowering the taxpayer’s rate of \$0.05 each year in the two-year extension. With the new tentative five-year agreement effective this year, the taxable value of LaSalle Station will increase to \$530 million, again putting the district in the position to decrease your tax rate of \$1.74838 to \$1.72838.

Arriving at the \$1.72838 tax rate can be a bit confusing so I would like to remind you of one of the extra steps Seneca High School takes in the levy process called abatement. Sometime in December, you may read in the local newspaper that the amount of tax dollars the district is

requesting is over 19% higher than last year's extension, or the amount of actual dollars received. Please remember that although the district is requesting this amount, we will reduce the levy or "abate" down to the agreed upon final tax rate of \$1.72838. The percentage increase is also higher than previous years because of the increased valuation of the LaSalle Station from \$460 to \$530 million. This abatement occurs in the spring, after the district receives its first draft of the extension from the LaSalle and Grundy County Clerks. By levying an amount greater than what we are truly seeking, we can ensure that the "draft" tax rate we receive in the spring is greater than the target and then abate to the precise rate for all taxpayers in the district. This process has been used by our District for the past nine years as part of the agreement with Constellation and rest assured, by the time you receive your tax bill in the mail, your propertyCons tax rate for Seneca High School will be 2 cents less than last year.

If you ever have any questions regarding the levy process, tax rates, or any other financial issue involving Seneca High School, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at sgould@senecaahs.org or by phone at 815-357-5000.

From the Desk of SRO, Ken Sangston

There are many factors that contribute to the safety of students and staff while school is in session. The most important factor is something that is referred to over and over in the many training classes I have attended, which is, school culture. There is no doubt that having a school resource officer on campus has a huge impact toward school safety. The relationship that exists between school culture and school safety, in my opinion, is one of the biggest factors in working toward a safer school. Seneca High School creates a culture where students feel safe, supported, engaged, and accepted. Aside from the many sports and activities that students have the opportunity to be part of, administration, faculty, and staff, go to lengths to see everyone feels connected to the school in some way. This is done first through positive and stable relationships with staff, academics, support, expectations, opportunities, and a genuine feeling of being noticed and appreciated. School Culture will not replace a school police officer, safety policies, training, or preparedness, but it is an important factor in fostering a safe learning environment and making you feel at ease when your kids board the bus, or are dropped off at school in the morning.

This past spring Mr. Stecken gave me the task of reviewing our policies, procedures, and safety practices. During the summer a Student Reunification Plan was developed. This is a plan that provides a systematic procedure in reuniting students with parents in the event that we have evacuated to another location. The process of drafting, presenting, and testing the plan by the administration was completed and the plan was adopted. The faculty and staff were trained in October by having a demonstration followed by practical exercises. I feel confident that we will be able to reunite

students with parents in a timely manner in the event we have evacuated from our main campus.
I wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season.

Irish Pride !!
SRO Sangston

From the Desk of Activities Director, Ted O'Boyle

The 2022 fall season at Seneca High School has been one of great achievements and Irish Pride. I think what I will remember, most fondly, was the way the community rallied behind our football team in its playoff run as we hosted two home playoff football games this season. While all our activities had great seasons, the full bleachers, community decorations, fireworks, and buzz around this town were all great memories.

- **Irish volleyball:** Our freshman team went 20-8, our JV team went 25-6, and our varsity team ended its season with an overall record of 18-17. To start the season, the Lady Irish took 2nd place in the Hall Early Bird Tournament with a loss to a talented Fieldcrest team in the championship game. The Lady Irish went 6-2 in conference play. Perhaps most importantly, the Lady Irish volleyball program raised \$4,000 for "Volley for the Cure" children's cancer charities.
- **Irish Golf:** Our golf program had a successful season as well. The boys went 9-10 and the girls finished 12-7, qualifying for the sectional!
- **Irish Cross Country:** Another great Cross-Country season wrapped up at the annual state tournament at Detweiller Park in Peoria. Congratulations to Lady Irish runner Evelyn O'Connor who medaled as All-State, earning 12th place at the State Championship. Both the girl's team and Austin Aldridge qualified for the state tournament - a great accomplishment!
- **Fighting Irish Football:** Our varsity football team had a great season finishing 10-1 for the season. This season's success was made possible by a great buy-in from our team during the offseason. Coach Baker's summer workouts, supplemented by our own football lifts, gave our team an edge on the field. We had a great deal of success:

-9-0 Regular Season

-Vermillion Valley North Conference Champions

-Gave up zero points in conference play

-Ranked in the top ten AP poll from week 5 on

-Earned 11 positions on the All-Conference teams, out of players from 12 teams being represented from both sides of the conference

-JV finished 6-0-2 and greatly improved as the year went along

-Fighting Irish junior lineman Chris Peura was named first team All-State!

· **Fall Activities:** Our cast and crew of the play “Clue” performed before our Senior Citizen night, our junior high feeder districts, and two nights each of nearly 200 seats filled. The kids put a lot of time into this production and did a great job. Additionally (as showcased in Mr. Maierhofer’s article), our FFA is off to another great start this year. The halls of SHS are always buzzing with student and student-athlete activity in the Land of the Irish!

From the Desk of Dean of Students, Mark Giertz

The beginning of the 2022-2023 school year at Seneca High School has jumped off to a great start and we are excited to keep the momentum rolling with our Seneca Way Day initiative. Here at SHS we take pride in continuing to strive for academic excellence and our students and staff have embodied that philosophy very well. Our focus over the past couple of years has been to develop a strong line of communication within all departments across the board, to push our critical thinking amongst our student body, and collaborate new methods and ideas that are successful in the classroom. Through staff collaboration, community feedback, and administrative guided professional development, we continue to strive and keep student academic success at the forefront of our mission.

During our Homecoming School Improvement Day, staff and administration met in small groups to discuss, review, and analyze what we had started a year ago with our “Three C’s.” Part of our mission in this development is to improve our students’ critical thinking from all ends of our subject areas, to be creative in gaining student excitement and enthusiasm within our lessons, and to have staff gain further knowledge from other departments in the process. As each group met, our staff began by sharing successes and challenges that may have already come to the forefront of their curriculum and how each staff member was able to strive beyond those expectations. Teachers were able to collaborate with other departments during this time and take away key highlights that will be put in place as the semester progresses.

Each year as we go into depth with our Seneca Way Day, administration begins to challenge our staff with setting goals they know will push the limits inside their classrooms. Through conversations about how to push higher level collaboration amongst students, to meeting with other departments and hearing positive feedback with what is working, our staff has taken on the challenge. Taking time throughout our first teacher institute day this year to organize, process, and implement the key concepts from teacher collaboration has been very successful and we look forward to witnessing those accomplishments with student academic achievement.

Overall, the SHS administration, staff, and students have gotten off to a great start this year and want to keep that momentum rolling into the second semester. From developing and getting our RISE program up and running, to continually pushing forward with our Seneca Way Day mission, our staff looks to take on our professional development challenges. The knowledge, discussions, and amount of time our staff have dedicated in making their curricular goals rigorous, thoughtful, and productive will continue to be our focus throughout this year here at SHS.

SHS Strength & Conditioning Update from Mr. Dan Baker

Something that has become a progressively more important part of our Irish Athletics culture at SHS over the last several years is our Strength & Conditioning program. As a graduate of SHS, and now a teacher/coach for the last 13 years, I have seen our weight room go from a dingy and ill-equipped room in the West Campus, to the excellent and well-equipped facility we now have in the new addition to our building. I've seen summer and off-season training sessions go from just a few football players to our weight room being packed with boys and girls from all different sports. The progress to where we are now was a slow and steady build for a while, but things have really taken off in the last few years.

What has led to this strong cultural shift? There are several reasons. First of all, our facilities have definitely improved over the years with top-of-the-line equipment and a weight room that rivals many of the biggest high schools in the state. Also, our sport coaches have grown more and more supportive of their athletes training both in Athletic PE during the school day and outside of school hours. Another beneficial step came when we created a Strength & Conditioning Coach position. This brought unification across all sports, with all athletes being trained in a cohesive fashion rather than randomized training from several coaches. This move also took a lot of burden off the shoulders of sport coaches, allowing them to focus on their highest priorities. The most important reason our Strength & Conditioning program has thrived, though, is simply from the buy-in of our student-athletes. Despite all the previously mentioned steps, nothing would improve without the dedication, time, effort, and leadership put in by our young men and women.

It's certainly nowhere near the only reason, but I truly believe that the improvements made in our training program have contributed to athletic success here at SHS. You can see the role it has played in the health, strength, speed, and athleticism of our athletes, and the wins and accomplishments they are accumulating. By creating an environment in our training where they can compete with each other, as well as themselves, athletes are driven to improve by lifting heavier, jumping higher, running faster, and training harder. They can see tangible evidence of their improvement in all the data we track, driving them to work even harder. It makes me very proud to see a weight room full of boys and girls from all different sports working together in a crowded weight room, all supporting and encouraging each other as one Fighting Irish team! I am greatly appreciative of our coaches, administration, students, parents, and community that

all support this effort...and we've only just begun. I can't wait to see what the future holds.

Students of The Month:

August – Ashley Alsvig, Role Model; Calvin Maierhofer, Student of the Month; Lilly Mueller, Rooking; and Elizabeth Reyes, Irish Pride.

September – Clara Bruno, Irish Pride; Chris Poyner, Student of the Month; Kate Biros, Role Model; and Lauren Thomas, Rookie.

October – Lillian Pfeifer, Rookie; Tynan Justice, Irish Pride; Anna Bruno, Student of the Month; and Brady Barla, Role Model.

November – Faith Baker, Role Model; Addysen Applebee, Rookie; Emmett Liberg, Irish Pride; and Maggie McDonald, Student of the Month.

College Board's National Recognition Program

Congratulations to our own Calvin Maierhofer, Colin Collet, Christopher Poyner, Anna Bruno, Maggie McDonald, and Stephanie Bernhard who are one of 62,000 students from across the country to earn academic honors from the College Board's National Recognition Programs! These National Recognition Programs grant underrepresented students with academic honors that can be included on college and scholarship applications and connect students with universities across the country, helping them stand out during the admissions process. Colleges and scholarship programs use these honors to identify students from underrepresented groups through College Board's Student Search Service.

Calvin Maierhofer, Colin Collet, Christopher Poyner, Anna Bruno, Maggie McDonald, and Stephanie Bernhard earned this recognition by excelling on their PSAT/NMSQT, PSAT 10, or AP Exams and in their classrooms. Students who may be eligible have a GPA of 3.5 or higher and have excelled on the PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10, or earned a score of 3 or higher on two or more AP Exams; and attend school in a rural area or small town. Eligible students are invited to apply during their sophomore or junior year, and are awarded at the beginning of the next school year.

Student Recognitions – 1st Semester

In the month of November, six SHS students traveled to two different locations to perform at ILMEA District 2 Music Festivals. Being selected to perform in the ILMEA District Festival is a great honor and these students earned their spots by demonstrating a high level of musicianship in what can be a very competitive audition process. Student performers participating in the District 2 Festival at Augustana College on November 5 include Parker Cox and Lilly Lynch in

the 9/10 Choir; Tynan Justice in the Senior Band; and Ashlin Jackson and Bruce Smolucha in the Senior Choir. On November 19, Anna Bruno performed with the District 2/8 Senior Orchestra at DeKalb High School.

TCC Leadership Conference

On Monday, October 17, Seneca High School brought seven students to Seneca Oaks for a leadership workshop put on by the Tri-Country Conference (TCC). Each school in the TCC brings a mixture of freshmen through seniors each year to enhance their leadership skills through a series of dynamic activities which include team building and small group work. Keynote speaker Ted Wiese organizes and directs all the activities to promote working together, staying positive, and making everyone achieve. Throughout the day Mr. Wiese was able to tie each experience into the fundamental elements of good leadership.

Seneca FFA Team Third in Nation

The Seneca FFA Landscaping and Nursery/Landscape Career Development team placed third in the country at this year's competition at the National FFA Convention. Calvin Maierhofer placed seventh overall as an individual and earned a scholarship. The other team members were: Ashlin Jackson, 17th ; Emma Smith, 24th; and Chris Poyner, 28th. All four ranked "gold." Laura Yegge was the honorary captain of the team.

The CDE had students reveal their knowledge and skills that are needed to be successful in the landscaping and nursery industry. Components of the competition included a written test covering plant science and landscaping knowledge, and identification of over 125 plants and fifty plant disorders. Students were also required to complete several practical skills assessments related to the landscaping industry, including proper and safe equipment usage, patio construction, use of surveying equipment, plant installation, pruning, and plant propagation.

In addition to technical knowledge, the event challenged students' written, verbal, teamwork, and math skills with a series of practicums that required them to communicate with judges face-to-face as they solved problems, worked as a team to solve mathematical landscaping challenges, and composed a business letter to clients.

Team coach and horticulture teacher, Jeff Maierhofer, said, "I am so proud of this team. To rank this high in the country takes weeks of hard work and review. This team had a goal of making it to the National FFA Convention stage, and they accomplished that."

The team advanced to nationals by virtue of winning the state Horticulture Career Development Event last spring. The competition is an extension of the horticulture curriculum at Seneca High School.

The National Nursery and Landscape Career Development Event is sponsored by Kubota and Haviland Plastics.

The Seneca FFA Attends National Convention

The last week of October saw 33 Seneca FFA members, three advisors, and superintendent Dan Stecken in Indianapolis for the 2022 National FFA Convention and Expo. They were part of an audience of 70,000 FFA members nationwide who were registered for this year's convention. Convention sessions were held at Lucas Oil Stadium in downtown Indianapolis and the huge agricultural Career Expo was held at the convention center. In addition to the many recognitions presented, members listened to the retiring address of the National FFA officers and other guest speakers.

The Seneca FFA was recognized on stage as a 3-Star chapter and Garrett Granby was recognized for receiving the American FFA Degree. The American Degree is the highest level of degree an FFA member can receive and is the culmination of five years of dedication.

Seneca FFA member, Tynan Justice, was one of seventy members that comprised the very exclusive National FFA Band. The "mail order band" came together for the first time on the previous Saturday and melded into a premier unit in just two days.

The Agronomy Career Development Team of Carter Thomas, Erinn Kenney, Kenny Daggett and Addison Steigler placed in the silver division. Members are required to complete a written exam, identify crops, weeds, diseases, insects, and seeds. They were also asked to grade grain, develop a production plan for a crop and present it to judges, and discuss current agronomic issues.

The Nursery/Landscape CDE team of Calvin Maierhofer, Ashlin Jackson, Emma Smith, and Chris Poyner placed a school record high of third. Maierhofer was the seventh highest individual in the country.

FFA members visited the National FFA Center, the Indianapolis Speedway Museum and facilities, the Indiana State Museum, the Indianapolis Zoo and Botanical Gardens, the NCAA Hall of Fame, and Kelsay Farms. A private grounds tour of Victory Field, the triple-A stadium in Indy, was conducted to expose members to careers in turf and sports management. The group also attended the "World's Toughest Rodeo" at the Indiana State Fairgrounds.

2023 HOBY Recipients

Payton McDonald, Benjamin Biros, and Christopher Smith, Seneca High School sophomores, have been selected to represent Seneca Township High School at the 2023 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. Payton McDonald is the son of Mark and Carrie McDonald of Seneca, and Benjamin Biros is the son of Cash and Sarah Biros of Mazon. Christopher Smith is the son of David Smith of Sandwich 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 Payton, Benjamin, and Christopher on their accomplishment.

Illinois State Scholars 2022 - 2023

Seneca High School is proud to announce 10 Illinois State Scholars for the 2022-2023 school year. This year's recipients are: Ashley Alsvig, Brady Barla, Stephanie Bernhard, Anna Bruno, Colin Collet, Calvin Maierhofer, Maggie McDonald, Christopher Poyner, Alexis Sprinkel, and Ryan Starwalt.

Criteria for this prestigious award is as follows: The Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) obtains academic data from the high school for students at the end of their sixth semester electronically. The State Scholar formula calculation uses a combination of the test scores, unweighted GPA, rank, and class size. These students are selected based on SAT Test score and class rank.

The Board of Education, administration, and staff of Seneca High School are very proud of these students and congratulate them on receiving this award of distinction!

DAR Good Citizen Award Student Honored

Calvin 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 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.

Calvin currently serves as the Chairman of the FFA Leadership Team, National Honor Society President, Senior Class President, Irish Power League Team Captain, Cross Country Team Captain. and serves on the Superintendent Advisory Committee. He is in FFA, Conservation in Action (CIA), Teens Resisting Unhealthy Social Temptations (TRUST), State Academic Challenge Competition (ACES), Math Team, Drama Club, Spanish Club, Student Ambassadors, Basketball, Baseball, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Chorus, Chamber Choir, Irish Live, plays, and musicals.

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

Ending this Newsletter saying, “The Seneca High School Board of Education would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.”