**News from Bluffton High School**

 It hardly seems possible that we have reached the halfway mark of the 2012-2013 school year.

I am constantly amazed by the talents and work ethic of our students, teachers, and staff. Our students are continuing to perform at a high level in the classroom as over 200 students have been accepted into the Renaissance Program.

Our student body is very involved in a number of extracurricular and co-curricular activities, with over 70% of our students involved in at least one activity. This fall 95 of our student-athletes were named NWC Scholar-Athletes, an honor awarded to those student-athletes who maintain a 3.0 G.P.A. while earning a varsity letter.

Our students continue to excel in our musical arts programs. The band and choir students did an excellent job with their concerts as did the drama club with its production of Born to be Wild. These students are preparing for future performances, including the musical Alice in Wonderland in the spring and their monthly **Senior Citizen Breakfast Performances.** These performances all start at 8:30 in the middle school cafetorium and on the following dates: Feb 13 – musical variety, Mar 6 – concert band, Apr 10 – drama club, and May 8 – jazz band.

We will begin our student scheduling process for next year around mid-February. Students will receive scheduling materials and have curriculum changes explained to them. Please review with your child what courses she/he plans to take and how these courses relate to the student’s future.

OGT Week will start on March 11 with many different activities taking place. The sophomores will take the Ohio Graduation Test while the freshmen will take a practice OGT test. The juniors will work on ACT prep, and the seniors will prepare and present their cross-curricular research project.

Use our website, www.bluffton.noacsc.org, to look up all the upcoming events and activities at our school or to log on to Progressbook to monitor your son/daughter’s grades. The support our students receive from their parents, peers, and our community plays an important role in their upbringing and is the reason our students have been so successful over the years.

The following are some highlights of the first part of the school year:

* Congratulations to Noah Stratton, Landon Cluts, Sophia Marcum, and Lauren Yost for each being named student-of-the-month. Each of these students received a savings bond from Citizen’s National Bank, or Chase Bank, or First National Bank of Pandora.
* Jessica Brockert was awarded the Honda-OSU Partnership Math Medal Award. Jessica was honored at Honda of America Manufacturing in Marysville in November.
* Isaac Little and Trent Phillips were named to the Allen County Youth Leadership Program, which brings students from around the county together to build on their leadership qualities.
* Many of our high school students are involved in the after-school tutoring program called SOS (Students for Other Students). These students work with 4th and 5th graders to enhance their academic progress.
* The economics class attended a Financial Day seminar, sponsored by Superior Federal Credit Union, at UNOH on September 19.
* The high school sponsored a successful Red Cross Blood Drive on September 21. The community is welcome to participate in the next scheduled blood drive in May.
* The PSAT, Preliminary SAT®/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test, was given to many of our sophomores and juniors on October 17.
* A Financial Aid Night was offered to parents on December 5. Lawrence Matthews, Director of Financial Aid at Bluffton University, was on hand to talk about the financial aid process and the FAFSA form.
* The junior class attended a College Career Day at Rhodes State College on December 14. Students picked three careers of interest. Type of work, job setting, education needed, and benefits earned were discussed regarding their choices.
* All 16 student-senate members donated their time and effort for a Community Service Day on December 18.
* Students and staff did a great job with the Toys-for-Tots campaign.
* During one of our fall assemblies, Jimmy Bell spoke on a variety of topics to our students about making positive choices regarding academics, drug & alcohol use, bullying, social media, and dealing with pressures teenagers put upon themselves.
* Our SADD club, Students Against Destructive Decisions, distributed red Bluffton Pirate wristbands to students who signed a pledge to stay drug and alcohol free during Red Ribbon Week. The SADD club has also held a few after-game parties for students during the basketball season.
* Twelve students from grades 10 to 12 attended the first NWC Sportsmanship Conference this fall. Approximately 100 students from the 10-member schools collaborated on the ideals of sportsmanship and the expectations of our student players and fans.

Thanks again for the continued support our parents and community give to our high school students.

**Bluffton Elementary Review - Tim Closson, Elementary Principal**

The first half of the 2012-2013 school year has been filled with numerous fun and educational events. Many enriching activities have taken place in and outside our classrooms.

 In September, K-3 students were entertained by a Safety Pup assembly. They were informed about internet safety, stranger danger, and additional safety issues.

October was filled with events. Art Beat began its 28th year with students in grades two through five. Artists featured for this year were Louis Morris, John Singer Sargent, Henri Matisse, Georgia O’Keeffe, and Jackson Pollock. We celebrated Red Ribbon Week to promote a drug free life. Kindergarten students enjoyed their annual field trip to Suter’s pumpkin patch for cider and pumpkins. They participated in the Apple program, which introduced students to a variety of materials that children with disabilities use to learn and play. The first graders attended Operation Band-Aid at St. Rita’s in Ottawa and toured the Swiss Historical Homestead. The Bluffton Fire Department gave presentations to our K-1st graders for Fire Prevention Week. Keeping with tradition, students enjoyed a ride on the old fire truck. They also attended a Kids-On-The-Block program. This puppet presentation showed students ways to understand and interact with children with disabilities. Second grade children enjoyed a Kool-Aid experiment demonstration by SESA (Science Enhancement for Science Advancement – a partnership between Allen County Schools and their industry partners). Third graders visited the Allen County Museum to learn about local history. Fourth grade students visited the Lamb and Lion Peace Arts Center to learn about accepting differences among people. A science field trip allowed fifth graders to visit the Neil Armstrong Museum or the Challenger Learning Center. The students participated in activities such as building a rocket with a payload, being part of mission control, or acting as an astronaut on the space shuttle.

November was a busy month. Ninety-eight percent of our students were represented by at least one parent for parent/teacher conferences. This was an outstanding show of parental support. We are grateful for the veterans who gave presentations to our students in honor of Veterans’ Day. The elementary library and the P.T.O. sponsored a Book Fair which helped raise funds to purchase additional library and classroom books. The third grade visited Bluffton University for a picture-book presentation by Floyd Dickman. The elementary students attended"The Ned Show," which emphasized courage, courtesy, and hard work.  COSI-On-Wheels, an annual event funded by Allen County’s SESA program, presented Exploring Ecology to students in grades three through five.

The past Christmas season was exciting. The second graders worked hard in their Santa’s Workshop to make Christmas gifts. Our students displayed their musical talents with an instrumental concert (grades 4 & 5) and the elementary Christmas program. Both were well attended and supported by family and friends. The annual Christmas service project involved collecting food items for the local food pantry. This was a great opportunity for our students to help others during the Christmas season. Thank you for your support!

 We are grateful for the many volunteers in the elementary school. On any given day we have parents and community members helping our staff by tutoring or assisting in various activities or projects. We appreciate the tutors involved with the Project MORE reading program. Sixteen volunteers serve 22 children for this program. We also receive invaluable support from our P.T.O., which helps to organize volunteers for events such as COSI-On-Wheels, furnishes special-event meals for teachers, provides popcorn for the Christmas movies, and raises funds through various sources such as Bakery Bingo, BoxTops for Education, and Market Day.

Finally, I would like to congratulate all teachers, staff, parents, and students for achieving all positive marks on the district report card. It was the seventh consecutive year that all indicators of the elementary report card were achieved. This is the fifth year we achieved the rating of **Excellent with Distinction**. We are proud of this achievement and thank you for your continuous support. Please visit the school’s website for updated information and monthly student newsletters at: www.blufftonschools.org.

Middle School – Dean Giesige

As the spring season approaches and the middle school moves into the second half of the school year, the teaching staff continues to prepare our students to meet the goals and challenges that have been set before them. This time of the year also signifies the beginning of planning for the 2012-2013 school year. In the next few months, your child will receive information about scheduling classes for next year. Parents and students should carefully look over the information provided in order to build a good educational plan.

For the eighth consecutive year, Bluffton Middle School received the top rating of **Excellent** by the Ohio Department of Education on the local report card.

During the last two weeks of April our students will be taking the State Achievement Test, which incorporates skills that have been taught throughout the school year. It is very important for the students to know that adequate sleep, proper nutrition, and hard work and dedication to their daily schoolwork will be very beneficial to them when it comes time to test. If you have any questions or concerns about the test, please contact Mrs. Karen Foltz or me.

Our newly-elected student senate has taken an active role and done a great job organizing and planning after-school activities and fundraisers. They have collected canned food items for the local food pantry, sponsored a spaghetti dinner, collected toys for tots, and gathered can tabs to benefit the Ronald McDonald House,

Each month teachers select two students from each grade level to be students-of-the-month. These students, who demonstrate potential, put forth extra effort, and respect their fellow classmates, receive a Pirate t-shirt and two movie passes to the Shannon Theatre. Recognition goes to Rhett Donaldson, Zoie Joseph, DeAndre Nassar, Averey Rumer, Olivia Amstutz, Logan Rhodes, Leah Conley, Braden Conrad, Kaitlyn Burkholder, Mihn Spallinger, Morgan Auchmuty, Hunter Busch, Abbie Parkins, Douglas Nester, Brooke Koontz, Levi Smith, Grace Nickels, and Levi Mikesell.

The middle school band, strings, and choir gave great performances during October and December. The string choir performed for the Allen County Head Start Program, Allen County Museum, Lockhaven Nursing Home, Bluffton Mennonite Memorial Home, and the Senior Citizens Breakfast. Their next concert is scheduled for March 26th during the Music Boosters BBQ.

Isabel Maselli won our school spelling bee, and Douglas Nester was the runner-up. Isabel will compete in the county spelling bee in February at Rhodes State College.

I want to congratulate our student athletes who competed in the fall sports season and commend them on the fine sportsmanship they displayed throughout the entire season.

The students, faculty, and administration wish to thank our parents and community for their continued support in helping us strive to meet the educational and social needs of our middle school students.

District Newsletter - Winter 2012-13

Mardy Herr

We endeavor to provide access to quality learning tools, technologies, and resources to further engage our students in the learning process. Middle school classroom computers were upgraded, and 8 to10-year-old machines were replaced. We added a new 30-station computer lab in both the middle school and high school. Interactive projectors were installed in the high school art and home economics classrooms as well as the elementary kindergarten and special education classrooms.

TECH TIP: Digital Footprint?!

There are numerous opportunities to be creative and develop good skills in a social media environment where we are encouraged to submit a multitude of information about ourselves onto the Internet via personal profiles, photos, videos, art, poetry, and blogs. With the Internet being an open environment, our digital footprint begins taking shape the minute we go online and can become our new first impression. It is important to realize that universities and employers can now use the Internet to check up on us. While reputation management remains challenging for adults, one can imagine how difficult it is for children to understand how the digital decisions they make today will stay with them and the rest of cyberspace forever. It is important for us to be safe by keeping online information about ourselves limited and to focus on doing positive things.