Due to the COVID-19 school closure, this Wildcat Review spring edition covers Oxford Community School District news through the end of April. The Wildcat Review summer edition will also be delayed to include the Class of 2020 Commencement.

SPPRING 2020
WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION

BOND UPDATE

The planning and scheduling of projects to be completed in the second series of the bond are well underway. In the past several months, the bids were received, trades secured, and summer work has begun. Thankfully, the bids came in under the original estimations allowing enough in the budget to update ALL elementary playgrounds this summer!

Parking lots for Daniel Axford, Oxford Elementary, and Clear Lake will be replaced. These buildings will not be accessible this summer. All activities in these buildings are either canceled or have been moved to a different location. If it is determined to be safe to open for the OELC Summer Camp, it will take place at Lakeville Elementary and begin on Monday, July 6. Unfortunately, because of space constraints and licensing regulations, the program will only be accepting children ages 33 months through sixth grade.

At Oxford High School, the natatorium (pool) will be receiving an extensive amount of work and will be closed for use until the end of the summer. The heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning system (HVAC) and the interior lining of the pool are being replaced. The high school is also scheduled to have new flooring installed throughout the summer.

Fire alarm upgrades will be made at Oxford Elementary, Daniel Axford, and Oxford Middle School, and the HVAC controls at the middle school will be replaced. All schools (aside from the high school) will receive exterior lighting improvements this summer as well. New blinds will be installed at Oxford Elementary School, the middle and the high school. Finally, the transportation building will have many much-needed updates made inside and will receive a new roof.

Thank you in advance for your patience and understanding as we enter another summer of much needed district improvements promised with the passage of the 2017 bond.

COVID-19 CLOSES SCHOOL BUILDINGS

The words unprecedented, Executive Order, pandemic, and stay home, stay safe became ones we would begin to hear or read daily. The way our everyday life moved and functioned came to an abrupt halt on March 16, 2020. The coronavirus (which soon became known as COVID-19) that began to plague China in December of 2019 had made its way to the United States and began to threaten Michigan. On March 3, the first of dozens of communications began from our Superintendent to our district families as Governor Whitmer took measures to protect the residents of Michigan.

The changes in our school protocol began with pausing attendance awards and exam incentives that revolved around students being present or at school. The known facts about COVID-19 and how to prevent contracting it or spreading it were shared, and staff and students were strongly encouraged to stay home if they were not feeling well. The following week Michigan reported two cases of the disease, and the Governor declared a state of emergency. Superintendent Throne quickly assembled a Pandemic Task Force to help our district move forward in the safest way possible.

THE FIRST SCHOOL CLOSURE

On May 11, intensive disinfecting cleaning schedules were created and communicated for all of our classrooms and buses. Oxford Schools canceled all large group meetings, after-school activities, and clubs not knowing that things would be changing as soon as the very next day. In an 11 pm press conference on Thursday, March 12, Governor Whitmer would be closing all schools in the state for three weeks, beginning Monday, March 16. Staff and students reported to school that Friday, thinking they would only be gone for a brief time. Everyone was instructed to take any personal items, medication on file, musical instruments, and books they may want home.

Sadness loomed as students, staff, and parents grasped to understand all that this meant. The spring musical, Into the Woods, scheduled to debut the following week would no longer go on as planned. Elementary spring fairs and celebrations across the district were canceled, disappointing so many students and certainly putting a damper on all of the hard work our wonderful parent volunteers had put into preparing for them. Winter sports athletes were in the final stages of their season, and many competitions went on to be performed without audiences. Little did we know, at that time, all spring sports would be canceled for the year in just weeks. In the meantime, consumers flocked to the grocery stores exhausting the shelves of toilet paper, hand sanitizer, and bleach.

NON-ESSENTIAL BUSINESSES CLOSED

On Monday, March 16, the Governor closed down businesses across the state, such as theaters, sports venues, fitness facilities, and restricted restaurants to
Our graduating Wildcats.

As we await the virus' reprieve to be able to have a safe environment to celebrate culminating events students wait their whole school careers for were postponed - and another set of anticipated events to mourn, year-end trips and award ceremonies, fifth-grade camp and fly-up festivities, the eighth-grade dance-and another set of anticipated events to mourn, year-end trips and award ceremonies, fifth-grade camp and fly-up festivities, the eighth-grade dance-

For our Superintendent, Mr. Throne, the first week of the school closure meant countless meetings via Zoom and WebEx with Oakland County Schools leaders, fellow superintendents, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), Oakland County Health Department and the Governor’s office. The list of questions grew exponentially compared to the answers everyone was hoping to receive. The MDE let us know that any type of online school work provided by our teachers would not be counted towards our 180 required school days for the year. Keeping this in mind, yet wanting to keep our students engaged in learning, our teachers and staff provided online educational options, and many teachers connected with their classes through Zoom and Haiku.

School buildings closed through June

The initial closure was three weeks, which was two weeks for Oxford followed by the originally scheduled spring break week. We were all hopeful that life would return to normal and school would begin again on April 6, but the number of Michigan COVID-19 cases continued to rise. On April 2, the BIG announcement came, Governor Whitmer suspended all in-person instruction for Michigan K-12 students for the remainder of the school year. The following afternoon, the MDE gave school districts an official direction in regard to the continued education of students. In order to receive state aid for operations, Michigan school districts were called to provide a Continuity of Learning Plan, in accordance with Governor’s Executive Order 2020-35, and begin implementing plans by April 28. After working day and night, Oxford Community Schools submitted their detailed and comprehensive plan a week later. It was quickly approved for an April 20 start date.

The plan included remote online learning via online Zoom classrooms, recorded lessons, and Haiku. Our technology department passed out lap tops and Wi-Fi hot spots for students and staff in need of internet access. Everyone’s learning curve was challenged to adapt to the new normal. No two household situations were the same. Some families had parents working from home, and some had multiple siblings in several different grade levels. Some parents were essential workers left needing to find childcare for their children while other families were fighting the virus itself - making all other struggles pale in comparison. We all had a new reality, and another set of anticipated events to mourn, year-end trips and award ceremonies, fifth-grade camp and fly-up festivities, the eighth-grade dance-the list goes on and on. The most difficult new reality came for our seniors. The culminating events students wait their whole school careers for were postponed as we await the virus’ reprieve to be able to have a safe environment to celebrate our graduating Wildcats.

Food distribution for families in need

The school day provides more than an education for some of our students. It is also where they are assured two nutritious meals each day. With the school buildings closed, it was important that we found a way to continue to provide meals for our children in need. Beginning the first week of the initial closure, our Nutrition Services staff packed and distributed thousands of meals, in fact, 38,467 meals in the first two weeks alone. In mid-April, several local churches offered to help carry on the much needed and laborious meal packing and weekly distribution.

On February 4, the Oxford Schools community lost longtime teacher, colleague, coach, and friend Gayle Tucker. She was a 1974 Oxford graduate who went on to earn her teaching degree at Central and then returned to Oxford to serve the district as a physical education teacher and volleyball coach for 40 years. Mrs. Tucker recently retired in June of 2019. Sadly, she battled a short yet mighty fight against cancer passing away at home in the company of her loving family at the beginning of February.

With the tremendous number of people expressing their desire to pay their final respects to our devoted Wildcat, Mrs. Tucker’s visitation and funeral for Saturday, February 8, were moved from the funeral home to the commons area of Oxford Middle School. It was truly a beautiful ceremony and so fitting to honor her legacy. Several of her loved ones, including many of her fellow teachers and coaches, shared heartfelt stories and memories. The funeral procession commenced with one last walk through the Oxford Middle School gym with Gayle Tucker, surrounded by hundreds of the lives she has made on impact on through the years.

In her final evaluation meeting before retiring, Gayle told OMS Principal Dacia Beazley that she was most proud of maintaining relationships with students. She hoped they believed what she told them about fitness, how to treat others, and caring about their academic accomplishments. Gayle loved spending lunchtime with them and loved that they trusted her. “As a staff, we know she loved us too. She was generous and thoughtful and provided us with laughs and wisdom,” shared Beazley. Mrs. Tucker tweeted on July 19, 2019, @coachsbrain: “As I depart OCS, I would like to thank the thousands of students I have coached and taught the past 40 years. You all touched my life in one way or another, and you are the reason my career was so spectacular! Love you all and I enjoyed every minute of it!”

In the words her mother, Helen Smith, coined years ago, “Once a Wildcat, Always a Wildcat.”

Words cannot describe how deeply her loss will be felt across our district. She will be greatly missed.
WELCOME, NEW STAFF!

The following staff joined Team O since the January. Educational background is only listed for hired teachers and administrators.

**CHRISTA ANDREWS**  
Nutrition Services

**ALLISON CONZ**  
Speech Therapist

**EMMA LEIGH COX**  
Tutorial Assistant

**KELLIE FAW**  
Transportation

**JEANA HAVERS**  
Nutrition Services

**COLLEEN GODWIN**  
OELC

**MATTHEW MUELLER**  
OMS Special Education Teacher  
B.A. in Elementary Education  
Oakland University  
M.A. in Special Education, ASD  
Saginaw Valley State University

**CHANTEL NORRIS**  
Nutrition Services

**KIMBERLY POTTS**  
OHS Student Monitor

**AMANDA SAMPSON**  
Leonard Paraprofessional

**SEBASTIAN RODRIGUEZ**  
Nutrition Services Van Driver

**LISA WISNER**  
Nutrition Services

**TINA VANDERVENNET**  
Nutrition Services

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**SILEOREY AWARDED MDE BREAKFAST HERO**

This March, Oxford Community Schools District Manager of Nutrition Services Patty Silorey was honored by the Michigan Department of Education with the Breakfast Hero Award. Silorey works out of Oxford High School, home to nearly 2,000 students. She genuinely cares for each and every person she encounters every day. Silorey has the ability to connect to students and staff alike, making them feel welcomed, encouraged, and truly important. This alone keeps them coming in for breakfast day-after-day to start their morning in a positive way.

Mrs. Silorey’s contributions to the culture of the high school cafeteria have made a significant impact on it becoming the place students want to hang out before (and after) school. She is also an excellent role-model for her fellow co-workers. She comes into work daily with a joy-filled spirit, strong work ethic, great integrity, a humble nature, and a strong desire to go above and beyond in every aspect.

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**2020 SCHOLASTIC ART AWARDS**

This year more than 5,500 pieces of art were entered by southwestern Michigan seventh through twelfth-graders to the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, the longest-running, most prestigious program for creative teens in the US. Approximately 1,100 individual pieces of work were chosen to receive awards in the 2020 competition. Students’ work was on public exhibition at the College of Creative Studies Walter B. Ford II building at the Ford Campus in Detroit during February. All Gold Key pieces were automatically sent on to New York for national adjudication. Luke Farwell’s Gold Key winning acrylic painting, My Drug of Choice, was awarded the esteemed National Medal during the national adjudication.

Oxford students winning awards this year are:  
OSEC student: Luke Farwell - National Medal (acrylic painting-My Drug of Choice); 3 Gold Keys (acrylic painting- My Drug of Choice; acrylic painting- Nomophobia; ink illustration- The Hawk), 2 Silver Keys (charcoal illustration- Outside in, acrylic painting- Getting Ready for School), 1 Honorable Mention (acrylic painting- Owlman)  
Oxford Middle School student: Allison Stremersch - 1 Silver Key (ceramic- Mask)  
Oxford Virtual student: Carla Langfeldt - Honorable Mention (acrylic - Self-portrait)
Fifteen athletes signed letters of intent on Friday, February 7 to continue achieving their maximum potential at the collegiate level. Athletic Director Jordan Ackerman shared with the crowd, “We could not be more proud of the student-athletes signing their letters of intent today. Some of these young men and women have had this goal their entire lives, while others came into their own as high school students and were able to impress the college coaches more recently.”

Luke Acton - Bowling, St. Clair Community College
Zachariah Barrows - Bowling, St. Clair Community College
Megan Bouren - Soccer, Saginaw Valley State University
Jesse Burch - Baseball, Indiana Tech University
Micayla Burr - Tennis, Midway University
Drew Carpenter - Football, Northwood University
Anne Cobble - Cheer, Alma College
Cassie Darling - Cheer, Eastern Michigan University
Justin Powell - Bowling, Rochester University
Thomas Smalley - Baseball, Macomb Community College
Olivia Soule - Lacrosse, Maine Maritime Academy
Sarah Tyrrell - Softball, Concordia University
Antonia Vackaro - Track & Field, Oakland University
Madelyn Weiss - Volleyball, Shepherd University
Ashlee Weltyk - Diving, University of Illinois at Chicago

This year Oxford Schools DECA group was very well represented at the state competition in Detroit, Michigan, on March 5 -7, 2020. Oxford High School had 44 of its 52 students win advancement on to compete in International Competition in the categories of marketing, finance, hospitality, and management. Unfortunately, because of the pandemic, the International Competition scheduled to take place in Nashville, Tennessee, in April was canceled.
ON THE FRONTLINE

OHS Assistant Principal Kurt Nuss spearheaded a social media project thanking Oxford alum, working as frontline responders during the pandemic. More than 70 e-mails flooded his account almost immediately when the request went out. We are so proud of our Wildcats! Once a Wildcat, always a Wildcat!

COVID-19 STRIKES HOME

Oxford Virtual Academy (OVA) and Oxford Schools Early College (OSEC) Principal Janet Schell experienced first-hand the devastation this virus can wreak. Her husband, Scott, came down with pneumonia in March and was admitted to the hospital. After three negative COVID-19 tests, he tested positive on his fourth. Scott spent almost 12 days sedated on a ventilator.

Since family members of patients were not able to visit their loved ones to prevent the spread of the virus, Janet, along with her family and friends spent many of their evenings in the hospital parking lot. They would look up to his window, singing and praying for his recovery. Very sadly, Scott lost his mom (unrelated to COVID-19) while he was on life support, but he was fortunate to survive his battle and is currently recovering at home. His family is beyond thankful they will have a chance to make more memories together again.

Janet shares, “We’d like to thank the Oxford Schools community for their prayers, cards, meals, and thoughtful check-in e-mails. We are overwhelmed by the support we received all through Scott’s illness and his mom’s illness and passing.”

THE WORLD OF EDUCATION GOES DIGITAL

In the Continuity of Learning Plan, schools were to reopen but with learning occurring remotely to keep everyone safe at home. Zoom became where classrooms and conference rooms would exist, where teachers and students would interact with one another, staff would have meetings, and the school board would convene.

This new way of learning and connecting would require every student and staff member to have access to a computer and internet service to be able to participate. After two technology surveys sent to district families and countless additional requests from parents and students in need, the Oxford Technology Department prepared and distributed more than 1,000 laptops and more than 50 Wi-Fi hot spots to our school community.

Nights and weekends were and continue to be spent working extra hours for many of our administrators, teachers, and support staff. Planning and transitioning lessons from the brick-and-mortar classroom to at-home online learning for all ages and classes in a very short time window has been a challenge, to say the least.
**FEEDING OUR CHILDREN IN NEED**

Children need nutritious food to grow and learn. Schools across the country are the source of a healthy breakfast and lunch five days a week for hundreds of students in need. Oxford is no exception to this. When the closure began, the option was given for schools to provide free meals for children. Oxford Community Schools Nutrition Services Director Karen Bissett quickly organized a plan, ordered food, and assembled staff to serve our community.

When the school closure was extended until the end of the year, the free food program was extended as well. Oxford partnered with local churches who volunteered to help with distribution. By the end of May, the program will have packaged and distributed well over 100,000 meals to the children in our school community.

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**OVA STUDENT MAKES, SELLS, DONATES MASKS**

OVA student, Maria Weickel, has made and sold dual-layer cloth masks on her Etsy shop at https://www.etsy.com/shop/uniquelymaria. For each mask that she sold, she donated one to high-risk individuals and our healthcare heroes. By the end of April, she had already donated over 100 masks. What a great example of the caring quality in Oxford’s Portrait of a Graduate!

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**LAKEVILLE STUDENTS BECOME SGN GLOBAL CORRESPONDENTS**

Turning on the television or scrolling through our phones for news and current events over the past few months afforded few stories of good news. Actor John Krasinski, best known for his roles in The Office and Jack Ryan, decided to create an online show focused on spreading positivity and called it “Some Good News.” It has garnered over 2 million viewers looking for upbeat content during these uncertain times.

Tommy and Emma VanHaaren from Lakeville Elementary, along with their younger brother Jack and the help of their parents, created an online newscast called VH News. It caught the attention of John Krasinski, and he invited them to be Global Correspondents publishing their newscasts on his online site for millions of viewers to enjoy. Way to be risk-takers, Wildcats!

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**YEAR-END CELEBRATIONS**

It began in March and just kept going. Events students look forward to, work toward, set their sights on were postponed, one after another, as the Stay Home, Stay Safe extensions only grew with time. Hope that these celebrations would be salvaged and the anticipated memories would still have a chance to be made slowly turned to disappointing cancellations or the creative collaboration of alternatives.

There was one group, in particular, that was hit the hardest- our seniors. Culminating events students plan for and look forward to their whole school career were put on pause. As this article goes to print, the dates that held the promise of their senior prom, senior breakfast, carnival, and last day of school clap-out have all come and gone. Commencement has been moved to June 30 with several contingency plans in place, depending on the health of our state. Dedicated staff and parent volunteers have found ways to honor our senior class. The Adopt a Senior Facebook page was created, where parents could post their photos and tell readers about their senior, and Wildcat fans could choose one to shower with small gifts and words of encouragement. The fence at Wildcat Stadium became a place for seniors to hang their Oxford jerseys t-shirts. Additionally, slide shows and videos of class memories have been compiled to share.

Only time will tell how this chapter of their story comes to a close before their next chapter begins, but our seniors can be assured we are doing everything in our power to make it a memorable ending.

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**ROBOCATS HELP FRONTLINE WORKERS**

Team 2137: The Oxford Robocats may have had their robotics competition season canceled, but they did not allow that to stop them from using their skills and knowledge to help those in need. Robocats students and mentors teamed up with the Romeo robotics team, The Byting Bulldogs, and worked around the clock to 3D print headbands to support clear safety shields for hospital workers and first responders. By the end of April, they had delivered over 4,000 face shields. They have certainly lived out their mantra, “We build more than robots.”
TOMORROW’S LEADERS

IN THE WORDS OF OUR WILDCATS!

Oxford Community Schools is proud to be the only International Baccalaureate (IB) school district in the state of Michigan. From elementary through high school, we are committed to the development of our students according to the IB learner profile. In this edition, we asked fifth-grade students at Leonard Elementary School to describe in their own words what it means to be RISK-TAKER:

“A risk-taker is someone who is willing to try new things and never give up.”
- Gavan Munson

“I think is someone who does something that is hard or they don’t know how to do it and do it.”
- Vincent Bruno

“Someone who steps out of their comfort zone.”
- Cooper Graham

“I think it is someone who goes past their capabilities and tries something new.”
- Jack Kozloff

“To me, a risk-taker is somebody that steps out of the box and tries new things.”
- John Kurzawa

“I think a risk-taker is someone who faces their fear.”
- Taylor Lang

“I think a risk-taker is someone who takes the extra step forward.”
- Keedan Pociask

OHS CHARITY WEEK

Oxford High School had an outstanding Charity Week this February. Creativity was flowing within the Leadership class as they planned new and exciting ways to generate funds amongst the student body. This year’s chosen charity was Kids Kicking Cancer.

Students all enjoyed the traditional Charity Week events of Mr. Oxford, coin stalls, boys Power Tuff volleyball game, music grams, and the Staff vs. Students basketball game. Last year’s new Jail and Bail event where teachers were arrested out of class and must raise money to go back to teaching was again a huge success. New additions to the week’s roster included an epic belly flop contest in the pool during lunch periods, a waffle bar, and an ice cream social.

Student’s blew the original goal out of the water more than doubling it, proudly presenting Kids Kicking Cancer a donation check totaling $20,289.27!

STUDENT EARNs PLACE ON LEGENDS DRUM CORP

Oxford High School sophomore and band member Somer Lach auditioned and was invited to perform with Michigan’s only Drum Corps International (DCI) sanctioned corps, Legends Performing Arts Association. Legends travels throughout the country during the summer competing against other corps in adjudicated DCI shows featuring the world’s most elite and exclusive marching ensembles of student musicians and performers. Sadly, COVID-19 prevented drum corps from performing this summer; however, it is a great honor that Somer was accepted to play with them and we are proud of her.
Oxford Elementary student Blake Myers entered into the 2020 Mini Master Model Builder competition that took place in Auburn Hills in early February, and he WON! More than fifty children ages 6 - 11 from around Metro-Detroit entered the contest. For the first portion of the competition, participants had 15 minutes to build their favorite animal. Blake created a llama (featured in the photo above) and advanced to the next level with nine other finalists. The next phase of the competition was to build a superhero. Myers creation took first place earning him two annual passes to the Auburn Hills LEGOLAND and invitations to attend various build events through the year to assist the LEGO Master Model Builder.

VANHAREN NAMED MICHIGAN TOP YOUTH VOLUNTEER

Oxford Middle School eighth-grader Alex VanHaren was selected as Michigan’s Top Middle-Level Youth Volunteer in the 2020 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards. He was honored with a $1,000 Scholarship and an engraved silver medallion along with an invitation to attend the 25th annual Prudential Spirit of Community Awards national recognition celebration. The celebration was originally slated to take place in Washington DC prior to COVID-19 but instead became the first-ever three-day virtual recognition event in the award’s history. Actress Kristin Bell congratulated the 102 extraordinary young volunteer honorees during the event. Additionally, in recognition of their spirit of service, each state honoree received $2,500 to donate toward the local COVID-19 response efforts of a nonprofit organization of their choice. Alex chose to split his donation between FISH and Good Samaritan’s in Lapeer.

Over the past five years, Alex VanHaren has donated more than 7,500 hats, gloves, and scarves to 22 schools and more than 20 charitable organizations through his Scarves 4 Cozy Kids charity. He has also organized annual donation drives and has collected more than 40 pounds of pop tops for a Ronald McDonald House, 400 pair of eyeglasses for the Lions Club, materials for Habitat for Humanity, used books for a children’s charity, and personal hygiene items for an agency serving victims of domestic violence.

Additionally, he received the President’s Volunteer Service Award. It recognizes Americans of all ages who have volunteered significant amounts of their time to serve their communities and their country.

WINTER SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS

This winter, Oxford student-athletes excelled in and outside of the athletic arenas shattering school records with their achievements. Here are some of this season’s outstanding highlights:

BOYS BASKETBALL
Trey Townsend set the school record with 445 season points and holds the second-highest career-scoring record of 999 points.

Trey Townsend – 1st team All-OAA, Honorable Mention All-State

GIRLS BASKETBALL
Top 10 in State for Team GPA with 3.903

Emma Morris – First Team All-OAA

Gabby Dinges – Honorable Mention All-OAA

BOYS BOWLING
Earns seventh straight OAA Red League Championship

Regional Champions

Finished in the top eight teams in the state

GIRLS BOWLING
Oakland County Champions

Academic All-State earning a team GPA over 3.65

COMPETITIVE CHEER
OAA White League Champions
Oakland County Champions

BOYS SKI
Division Champions

BOYS SWIM & DIVE
Ben Datsko and Zach Beatty – All-State

Ben Datsko – School records in 100 Butterfly and 100 Breaststroke

Nolan May, Ben Datsko, Zach Beatty, and Carter Pollard – School Record in 200 Medley Relay

WRESTLING
OAA Red League Champions

District Champions

Individual State Wrestling Tournament qualifiers:

Tate Myre, Jack Thompson, Jack Smith, Sal Vackaro, and Nate Call
“TODAY A READER, TOMORROW A LEADER”

Margaret Fuller

Each year our district is all a buzz in March with guest readers, visits from authors along with engaging themes, and enticing reading goals to promote March is Reading Month. Once again, the creativity in district buildings did not disappoint from Follow the Yellow Brick Road to Reading at Clear Lake Elementary to an out of this world theme at Oxford Elementary School, to name a couple. Our secondary students put their favorite books into March Madness tournament brackets to compete against one another in popularity. It is safe to say they enjoyed more bracket action than the actual basketball tournament this year.

Sadly, many of our scheduled events and guests had to be canceled due to the school closure, but we were able to welcome Representative John Reilly to many of our classrooms as guest readers early in the month. For the remainder of March is Reading month, staff picked up the torch and challenged students to keep reading from home in creative ways.
Mr. Balsley’s Auto Tech students paired up into two-person teams to compete in the annual CTE Autotech brake competition on March 10. His students put their learned skills, craftsmanship, and speed to the test as they completely disassembled and reassembled rear drum brakes on two different vehicles in a race against each other and the clock.

First place was awarded to Carl Winkelman and Devon May, with a combined time of 3.24 minutes. In second place was Kendal Boisvert and Alex Zmuda, with a combined time of 4.59 minutes. Tim Skirke and Peter Mitchell earned third place with a combined time of 6.57 minutes.

This year’s competition sponsors were The Oxford Rotary Club, Oxford McDonalds, and Steve’s Oxford Automotive. Mr. Balsley is always thankful for the generosity of the sponsors as well as the former staff and students who help time the event and make it all possible.

MAXWELL WINS MDE AWARD

Senior Oxford High School student Gihon Maxwell was honored with a 2020 Breaking Traditions Certificate of Recognition Award by the Michigan Department of Education this spring. She is one of fifty-eight high school students and four college students in Michigan to be recognized with a Breaking Traditions Award. This honor is given to students who have overcome obstacles and stereotypes to succeed in career and technical education (CTE) programs.

Gihon participates in the Mechatronics program at Oxford High School and the Oakland Schools Technical Campus Northeast (OSTC-NE). She serves as a student mentor and as a student ambassador at OSTC-NE. Gihon plans to become a CNC/CAD designer and is working towards obtaining her CAD certification in Mechatronics. Her advice to other students is, “Don’t be afraid to stand out with your amazing talents and do what you love no matter the obstacles.”

After graduating in 2009, Bridget Schultz went on to earn her Bachelor of Arts in Human Development and Family Studies from Michigan State University and then her Masters of Social Work degree. In 2018, Ms. Schultz joined our district staff as a Family School Liaison. Last year, she became a licensed trainer through the International Institute of Restorative Practices and now trains school staff at both Oxford and Novi Schools on restorative practices. Every summer, she volunteers with St. Joseph Catholic Church Youth Group as a project leader at a week-long summer service project retreat. Enjoy her perspective as a student and now a staff member and her advice for our current Wildcats:

“My experience as a Wildcat was amazing! Throughout my time as a student, I was given so many opportunities through the school district. In high school, I was involved in student council, where we ran fundraisers, dances, pep assemblies, and did our best to create a positive school climate. I took part in sports, clubs, and the National Honors Society to try and make the most out of my time in Oxford. I’m so grateful to all the teachers who pushed me, influenced me, and guided me to become a positive person.

After high school, I attended Michigan State University (Go Green!), where I was a double major in Human Development and Family Studies and Arts and Humanities. Through volunteering and interning in the Lansing area, I realized my true calling was social work. I’ve worked in the Lansing area with families in community-based programs, children with Autism in the greater Detroit area, and youth in the juvenile justice and foster care systems.

‘Once a Wildcat, Always a Wildcat’ stands true for me! I’m no longer a Wildcat student, but a Wildcat employee! I am the Family School Liaison at Daniel Axford and Oxford Elementary School. I provide social work services to our general education students. This is a new position for Oxford Schools, as it was just created at the beginning of last school year. The district saw a need to support the social and emotional needs for our students and took action by adding three Family School Liaison positions! I support students through one on one services, group services, and classroom lessons. Lessons focus on anything from friendships to problem solving to emotional regulation skills to academic behavior skills (preparedness for instruction, attention, organization, etc) and many other topics to set our students up for success! Often times, society expects that children know how to act, behave, and solve problems, when in reality children need to be taught these things. Working with students at a young age helps set them up for success in the future. On top of working with students, I also work with teachers by providing them with strategies and resources for supporting children’s social emotional needs in the classroom.

My advice for current Wildcats is to first, put your phone down every once in a while. There is an amazing world in front of you that you will miss if you’re always looking at a screen. Second, enjoy this current time in your life. There will be difficult times, funny times, sad times, and happy times, but enjoy them all. There truly is no other place with the community and love that is in Oxford!”