

Foundation for
**POTTSTOWN
EDUCATION**

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Happy almost summer, everyone. I hope that this newsletter finds you and yours all safe and well. Most of you have heard that we are conducting a campaign to raise funds toward the purchase of 1,000 Chromebooks for the students of the Pottstown School District. However, there are some other very exciting things that our Foundation is doing.

In this newsletter, you will learn about our early college program, a gift from the Foundation to all six of the school building's library and the funding of tickets for a Sensory

Friendly performance of this year's District Musical. We have also provided an update on the Chromebook campaign.

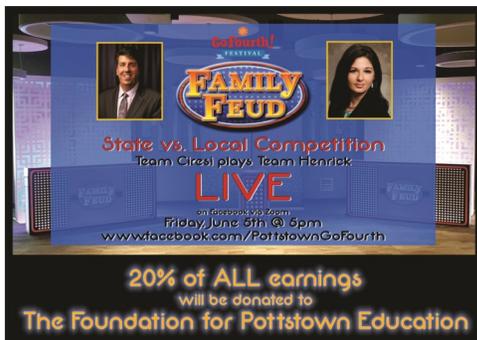
I would like to send a special shout out to the School District. The communications that have been sent out on a regular basis throughout this pandemic have been outstanding. This district staff has stepped up and beyond for the students of our district. From the food distributions, senior recognition online ceremony, the elementary school scholarship programs, the online learning, the special graduation for the Class of 2020, to the

yard signs placed in all of the seniors' yards and the signs on the seats of the auditorium, this district has shown true compassion and love for our students.

POTTSTOWN PROUD.

I hope that you all have a great summer and CONGRATULATIONS to the Class of 2020.

Joseph W. Rusiewicz II
Executive Director



AND THE SURVEY SAYS...

On June 5th starting at 5:00 pm Representative Joe Ciresi & Team and Pottstown Mayor Stephanie Henrick and Team will be our contesting teams for the evening. Whichever team brings in the most correct answers AND (more importantly) the most donations for the night will bring in the win, win win for the GoFourth! Festival, the Foundation for Pottstown Education and ultimately POTTSTOWN! Proceeds from this event will support "SUNNY 2020" Festival fund-

WHICH FAMILY WILL WIN THE FEUD?

raising efforts, which has been rescheduled to Sunday, September 6th from 4 - 9 with an amazing firework show at 9:15! PLUS, 20% of the proceeds will benefit the Foundation for Pottstown Education.

The individual team members for our June 5th virtual fundraising event are:

On The State Team: Joe Ciresi, Pam Hacker, Mari Echevarria, Mindi Cherry & Sarah Calvin

On The Local Team: Stephanie Henrick, Trenita Lindsay, Chele Hallman, Andrew Monastra & Celebrity Guest- American Idol's Top 7 Louis Knight

Not to be outdone, Joe reported that he once performed for The Pope...so who knows what talents the rest of these awesome participants hold! One thing is for

sure...there will not be a dull moment!

There will also be one of the great GoFourth! basket raffles to raise money for these two organizations as well as showcasing all of the wonderful raffle items during the Facebook Live event!

This promises to be a SUPER fun event! We can't wait to be with all of you virtually during the 1st ever Facebook Live Zoom fundraising party!

See you right here on June 5th @ 5pm, Pottstown!!



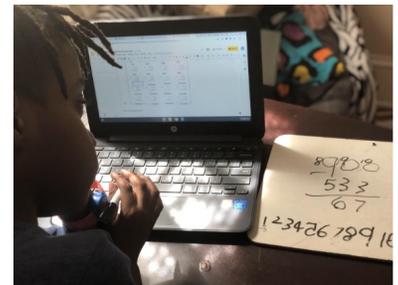
CHROME BOOK CAMPAIGN UPDATE



Thank you to the 63 donors who have supported our Chromebook Campaign to date. With donations, pledges and matches, we are at \$136,810 since April 30, 2020. This represents 40% of our goal. Thank you all for your support. Thank you to the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation for their tremendous support of this campaign by offering a \$100,000 matching grant. So far, we have pledges and donations of almost \$75,000 toward this grant. I am pleased to announce that we received a second matching grant. An anonymous donor pledged a matching \$50,000 donation. This amount is not included in the total listed above. Please also check with your employer to see if they offer a matching program. One of our donors sent us a check for \$250. She contacted her employer

who has a matching donation program and they sent a check of \$250. This was then matched by the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation making her gift of \$250 a gift of \$1,000. We are pleased not only with the financial support for this campaign but also the encouraging words sent to us by our donors. I would like to share two of these with you. One of our donors stated "I am so pleased to send this to you for the Chromebook campaign as it provided me with an opportunity to use my stimulus check. Keep up the great work." A second donor stated "As a Pottstown grad class of 1969, I received a wonderful education. I want to make sure the current generation of Pottstown students has the same opportunity." And our donors were not the only ones that we heard from. We are hearing from

parents whose children are now able to access the online learning thanks to the generosity of our donors. One of our Franklin parents wrote "I was stressing horribly on how I could homeschool all three, then they called me saying that they had two Chromebooks available and I was overly joyous and so blessed. If it weren't for the generous donation, I do not how I could have done it. We are so very grateful."



FOUNDATION FOR POTTSTOWN EDUCATION RECEIVES FUNDING TO SUPPORT SENSORY FRIENDLY MUSICAL PERFORMANCE



Picture (L-R) Bob Decker, Casey Fenoglio, Aram Eker, Sherri Morret and Joe Rusiewicz

The Foundation for Pottstown Education recently received funding which will provide free tickets for local students with special needs and their families to attend the first ever Sensory Friendly Performance of the Pottstown School District performance of *Suessical the Musical*. The funding is being provided through the generosity of a Community Wellness Grant from the Pottstown Hospital Tower Health, the Pottstown chapter of AMBUCS and Mr. and Mrs. Aram Eker.

On Thursday, March 5th the Pottstown School District will present a special showing of this year's musical. This will be a Sensory Friendly performance that is designed espe-

cially for individuals with autism spectrum disorders, sensory sensitivities, or other disabilities. Patrons will enjoy the show together with family and friends in a welcoming, inclusive, and relaxed space. The show will also have an interpreter for individuals with hearing impairments. Environmental conditions will be modified by maintaining a low-level house lighting in case guests must get up and move around, by eliminating harsh changes in theatrical lighting, through the avoidance of large sound and visual effects, and by the replacement of the 22 piece orchestra with two keyboards. House rules will be relaxed so that audience members can freely respond to shows in their own way and without judgment. They will be welcome to move around, get up, sing, or dance.

Tickets may be obtained by contacting the Foundation's Executive Director, Joe Rusiewicz [jrusiciewicz@pottstownk12.org](mailto:jrusiewicz@pottstownk12.org) or by contacting the District's Special Education Department at 610-970-6625. Tickets will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis.

Casey Fenoglio, Community Wellness Program Manager from the

Pottstown Hospital Tower Health, stated that "Funding this event aligns with the community's need to improve the health of all of our community members. Partnering with the Foundation and the School District in making this musical accessible to students can help with social inclusion, stress reducing and creating a positive emotional experience."

Aram Eker, who is a member of the Pottstown AMBUCS stated that "They are proud to partner with the Foundation as it aligns with our organization's mission of inspiring people to conquer challenges related to mobility and independence." Aram and his wife Donna are longtime supporters of the musical program in the Pottstown School District.

Rusiewicz indicated that when he first heard of this performance for the children of the district, he knew that the Foundation needed to support the program. "I think that this is such a great opportunity to include all of our local students. I applaud Bob Decker, Chris Sperat, the actors and stage crew for making this event happen."

SIXTEEN PHS SOPHOMORES SELECTED FOR THE EARLY COLLEGE PROGRAM COHORT VIII

The Foundation for Pottstown Education recently selected 16 Pottstown High School sophomores to be accepted in to the Early College Program Cohort VIII. This program was initiated in 2014 under the director of then Foundation Executive Director, Dr. Myra Forrest and provides funding for Pottstown High School students to take up to 30 credits at Montgomery County Community College West Campus. In order to be invited to apply for the program, the students must have a cumulative grade point average of 90% or higher mid-way

through their sophomore year of high school. This year, 49 students were invited to apply for the program out of which, 16 were selected.

The program has had six classes totaling 68 students graduating through the program with 100% of the students enrolling in a college or university upon high school graduation. Through the generosity of the donors of the Foundation for Pottstown, the tuition for the cohorts are paid either fully or in some cases at 50%. The distinction between full paid and partially paid

tuition is based solely on the student's family income. This year's students are: Kennedy Cole, Erynn Dunning, Nada Elgandy, Evelyn Estes, Summer Hollingsworth, Nasir Knuckles, Jacob Moser, Faith Nichols, Yasmin Paez, Allison Ormston, Anthony Pino-Castillo, Jesseny Redrovan, Jonerah Vinson, Brionna Williams, Daniel Williams, Jayniana Williams. Congratulations to the new cohort and their families.

FOUNDATION FOR POTTSTOWN EDUCATION APPROVES FUNDING FOR DISTRICT LIBRARIES



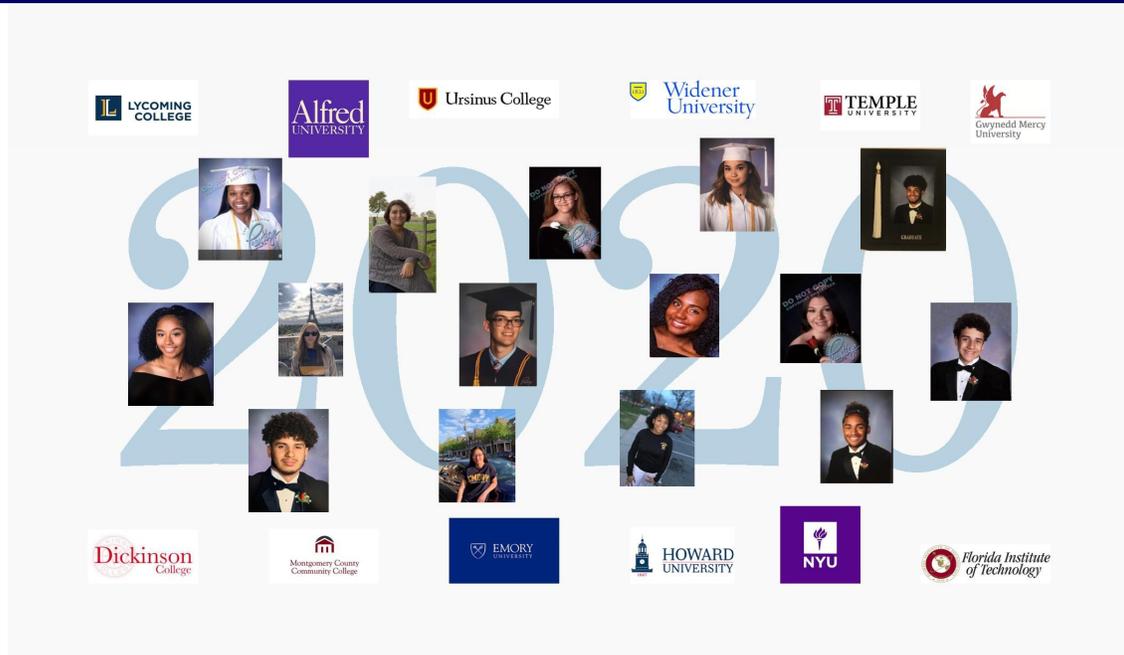
The Board of Directors of the Foundation for Pottstown Education recently approved funding requests which will provide assistance to all six of the School District Building Libraries. The funds were made possible through the generosity of the Foundation donors and total more than \$3,000. Each of the Librarians was asked to submit a request to the Foundation explaining the proposed project and how the funds would be used. After review by the Finance Committee who recommended the approval of the requests to the full Foundation Board, the funds were distributed for the implementation of each plan. Nicola Alutius, Librarian at both Barth and Franklin Elementary Schools, requested funding to purchase STEM Literacy Bags. The Literacy Bags will contain quality fiction and non-fiction relating to a STEM topic and contain a challenge activity based upon a Science or Math concept. Each bag will be available to teachers making them accessible to all students in both of the elementary schools. Some of the topics will include: Lego Building Block STEM Challenge, Sorting, Building Bridges, Houses, or Vehicles, Rapunzel STEM Problem Solving Kit, Three Little Pigs STEM Problem Solving Kit, Goldilocks and the Three Bears STEM Problem Solving Kit and Three

Billy Goat Gruff STEM Problem Solving Kit. Ted Freese, Librarian K-4 at both Lincoln and Rupert Elementary Schools, submitted his request to purchase an Ozobot EVO Educator Starter Kit and supplies for both of the elementary schools. This kit will teach the students how to code, basic STEAM skills, critical thinking and debugging. This system will provide all students with an opportunity to be exposed to simple coding skills. It will provide the students a 21st century skill that is applicable to the use of technology and will benefit all students in both of these elementary schools. Pottstown Middle School Librarian, Andrea Roberts's request will establish podcast learning resources for the middle school students. Podcasting is a great way to invite students to investigate authentic, engaging, complex questions and problems. It invites the students to share their voices with an audience beyond their teacher. Not only is podcasting fun, but it can build on important 21st century skills and competencies including communication, critical thinking, creativity and collaboration. The students will be able to emulate real journalists and famous pod-casters, and they will be engaged in designing their own learning by actively exploring real world issues and problems, developing ideas and theories, and pursuing answers and solutions. These resources will be available to all of the middle school students. Pottstown High School Librarian,

Kristen Ellis's funding request is to purchase an iTeach Mobile Power Tower which is a charging hub for electronics. The High School Library is in the process of creating a media center based on the transition from books to electronic research and the creation of work space for collaborations between the High School students. The beginning of the 2019/20 school year saw the implementation of using Chromebooks. Each Pottstown High School students was issued a Chromebook to use during their educational years at the High School. With the increase of the electronics, a need to charge these devices is increasing. This power tower will provide this opportunity for the students while working in collaboration with other students in the media center.



FOUNDATION FOR POTTSTOWN EDUCATION RECOGNIZES THE EARLY COLLEGE PROGRAM CLASS OF 2020



Fifteen Pottstown High School seniors were recognized at the May 21, 2020 School Board meeting for successfully completing the Dual Enrollment, Early College Program. These fifteen students were accepted in to the program in the fall of their junior year.

The Foundation began this program in the fall of 2014 with 68 students completing the program which provides the funding covering the tuition for up to 30 credits at Montgomery County Community College West Campus. Throughout the past six years the Foundation has provided more than \$415,000 in tuition.

In his presentation to the school board, Foundation Executive Director, Joe Rusiewicz praised the students for their accomplishments over the past two academic years. "The Class of 2020 earned more than 250 credits with an average grade point average of 3.48."

"if these students took the same classes at their chosen colleges, they would have spent

\$388,980 as opposed to the tuition paid by the Foundation of \$48,705 at MCCC." Rusiewicz shared.

All fifteen of the students have been accepted into an institution of higher learning. The 2020 Early College Program Class participants are:

Ka'Wanza Tori Barksdale Hodges who will attend MCCC majoring in Biomedical Life Sciences

Nayali Cruz enrolled at New York University studying Neuroscience

Daniel Darden attending Widener University for Psychology

Dereck Darden also attending Widener University and majoring in Pre-Athletic Training

Madison Friedman enrolling at Temple University to study Psychology

Emma Gawles has enrolled at Lycoming College studying Child and Adolescent Psychology

Andrew Green attending Temple University to study Political Sciences

Adriana Hayward will attend Gwynedd Mercy University to study Nursing

Paige Aaliyah Jones plans to at-

tend Temple University for Early Education

Jorge Mundo will attend Alfred University majoring in Athletic Training

Crystal Riveria enrolled at Florida Institute of Technology to study Marine Biology

Megan Robie will attend Ursinus College and plans to study Biology

Tanner Price Scott enrolled at Dickinson College where he will major in Computer Science and Archeology

Winni Weng enrolled at Emory University and will major in Biochemistry/Health Administration

Destiny Williams enrolled at Howard University majoring in International Business

Rusiewicz also indicated that 100% of the previous students enrolled in the Early College Program have all enrolled in a college/university with the first two classes achieving their bachelor's degree. Sixteen current sophomores have been selected for the Cohort VIII class that will begin in the fall of 2020.