



Pirate Pride

The Newsletter of the
Merrillville Community School Corporation
October 2019

Help raise money
for Merrillville
community schools



Walk, don't run, to support new education opportunities for Merrillville Community School students.

The Merrillville Education Foundation (MEF) will hold its third annual Walk-a-Thon fundraiser on Saturday, Oct. 12.

Participants in the "Better Health, Better Minds" event will walk to raise funds for MEF teacher grants.

The walk kicks off at 9 a.m., but registration begins at 8 a.m.

The event will be held at the Merrillville High School soccer/track and field area (east of the football stadium). In case of rain, participants will walk in MHS Field House.

Minimum participation donation is \$10 for ages 5 and up; families can participate as a group for a single fee of \$30.

For more information or to download your registration forms, visit:

MerrillvilleEducationFoundation.org.

Construction on Pierce Middle School entrance to begin Oct. 14

Clifford Pierce Middle School will be getting a facelift.

The purpose of the approximately \$1.6 million construction project is to increase security by bringing the administrative offices to the front of the building and changing visitor traffic flow through the entrance.

"We will be able to better monitor visitors and see what's going on in front of the school," said LaFonda Morris, principal. "We will also have better access to the cafeteria, where additional supervision may be necessary."

As a result, visiting parents will have increased access to administrators.



The construction on the front entrance of the building should be completed by the end of February 2020.

The project will create new offices for the principal, two assistant principals and dean of students; work areas for the office staff and receptionist; conference room for confidential meetings with parents; workspace and supply area; and

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Rock 'N Learn Family Fun Nights!

Come out with your child to your school's Family Fun Night and enjoy lots of fun learning activities, meet other parents, engage with teachers, and "Rock 'n Learn" the evening away. All events are from 5:45-7:30 p.m. Watch for the official invite to be sent home with your child, and make sure to RSVP.

Salk Elementary School

Oct. 14

Wood Elementary School

Oct. 16

Merrillville Intermediate School

Oct. 21

Iddings Elementary School

Oct. 23

Miller Elementary School

Oct. 29

Pierce Middle School

Nov. 5

Fieler Elementary School

Nov. 7

Guidance staff conducts senior interviews

Preparing for life after high school can be daunting for seniors and their parents.

To help streamline the process and make sure students are on track to graduate and move forward in their chosen career paths, school counselors from Merrillville High School schedule face-to-face meetings with every senior each fall.

Approximately 500 meetings take place with seniors who all have chosen their own unique paths upon leaving MHS, including college, military, trade school and the workforce.

First and foremost, counselors confirm seniors have or will meet all of the requirements for graduation:

- they have or are on track to pass their required classes;
- they have or will earn enough credits to graduate;
- they passed or are on track to pass their ISTEPs.

“It’s important to meet early, so if students are not on track to graduate, we can figure out a plan to get them graduated before it’s too late,” said Peter Fatouros, MHS school counselor.

Counselors also talk to seniors about their plans once they leave MHS and

outline requirements and timelines students need to get on track, including taking important tests like the SAT, ACT, ASVAB and AP.

“We want them to know all the resources they need to get things done,” he said. “We try to be thorough.”

Counselors take seniors through packets of information and checklists that students can take and share with their parents. The information also includes websites to scholarships.

To get into college, students must do three things:

1. Complete applications to their chosen schools.
2. Go to Parchment.com to send transcripts to colleges where they have applied.
3. Complete the FAFSA for financial aid.

Fatouros said they should apply for financial aid every year, even if they have been promised scholarships. Their financial aid applications may lead to opportunities to receive “free” money from their intended colleges.



Cayla Davis meets with School Counselor Peter Fatouros for her senior interview.

“Millions of dollars of scholarships go unclaimed each year because kids don’t feel like writing the required essays,” he said.

Seniors who are college bound should have applications in by Christmas, he said. Athletes hoping to play sports in college have requirements with the NCAA and should go to the online eligibility center to register and be certified.

The big message to seniors and parents is don’t wait till the last minute to complete college applications. Students will have more opportunities available to them when they apply early.

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Parents & Students

College & Career Fair

Thursday, Oct. 24, 6-7:30 p.m.

Freshman Cafeteria

Meet with colleges and trade schools from Indiana and neighboring states and learn about new opportunities!

Financial Aid Night

Wednesday, Nov. 20, 6 p.m.

High School Main Lecture Hall

Learn about the financial aid process via a presentation by a financial aid representative from Purdue University Northwest.

Afterwards, parents and students will be able to apply for financial aid that night in the MHS computer lab with help from the financial aid representative.

Construction on Pierce to begin Oct. 14

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add utilities and ventilation.

The Merrillville Community School Corporation already has the funds for the project, so taxpayers will not be impacted. The bulk of the renovation will be paid for by savings that resulted from refinancing a previous bond.

In addition, a small portion of the

project cost will be paid by the balance of a fund that was used to accumulate reimbursements from previous projects.

The construction project is scheduled to begin Oct. 14, and last approximately till the end of February.

Until then, the new main entrance into Pierce Middle School will be Door #5, located on its south side.

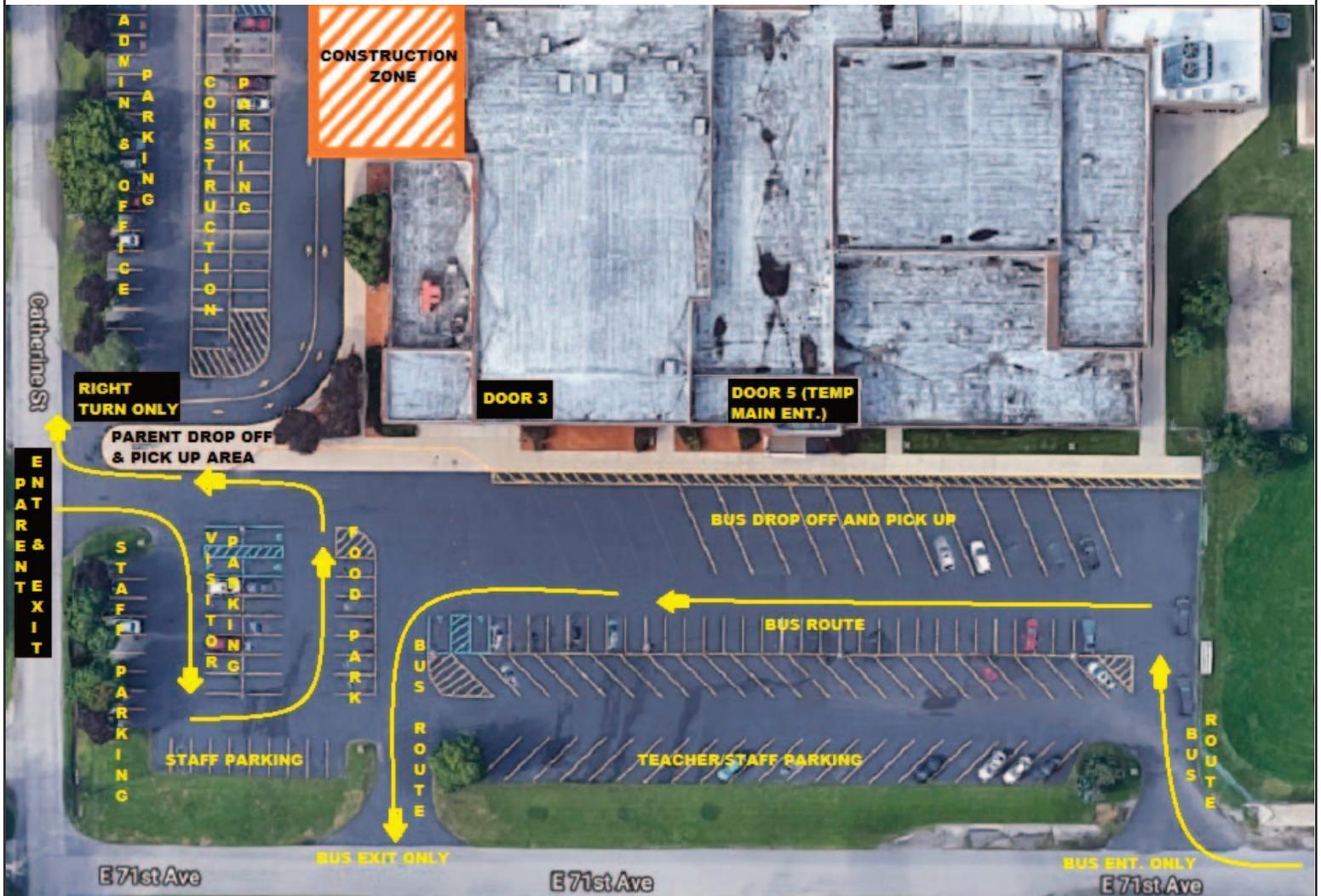
The project will change traffic flow

for student drop-offs (see diagram below).

The Memory Garden that was located in the front of the building will be moved to the north side of the new main entrance.

More information on the project will be available on the Merrillville Community School Corporation website, www.mvsc.k12.in.us.

New traffic pattern for student drop-offs at Pierce Middle School begins Oct. 7



Parents dropping off students are asked to enter the parking lot from Catherine St. at the southwest end of the campus. To get to the entrance, they should travel north on Catherine St., take a right turn into the parking lot, loop around and drop off their children on the peninsula sidewalk by the school. Students will walk down and enter through Door #5. Parents must exit the parking lot at the same place they entered, but they must turn right out of the lot and continue heading north on Catherine St. No left-hand turns onto Catherine St. will be allowed in order to keep traffic moving.

Thespians open year with ‘The Ash Girl’

Great theatre is as close as Merrillville High School. Join the award-winning Merrillville High School Thespians as they present their fall play “The Ash Girl” in Reinhart Auditorium.

Performances are scheduled for 7 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, Oct. 31 through Nov. 2; and 2 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 3. Tickets are available at the door: \$5 students, \$10 adults, \$5 seniors.

“The Ash Girl,” written by Timberlake Wertenbaker, is the contemporary retelling of the story of Cinderella.

Auditorium parking is available on the north side of the high school. Use entrance M to the Hall of Flags and auditorium lobby.



MHS junior Myia Dickerson (left front) and Theatre Director Thomas Mackey share State Gold Honor Troupe recognition with MCSC School Board Members, in back from left: James Donohue, Linda Jonaitis, Mark Lucas, Judy Dunlap and Tom Bainbridge. Dickerson, troupe historian, collected and presented a portfolio to the Indiana Thespians as evidence of the group’s ambitious schedule of activities throughout the year, which included community service.

Tune in Tuesdays!

Miller Elementary School Principal Jennifer Griffin reads a story to family and friends on Facebook LIVE at 6 p.m. every Tuesday on Miller School PTO’s Facebook page:
facebook.com/MillerSchool.PTO/



Public invited to view ‘The Autumn Sky’ at the planetarium

Fall is a great time to observe the night sky. Come out to the Merrillville Community Planetarium to enjoy the public program “The Autumn Sky,” scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Fridays, Oct. 4, 11 and 18, and Saturdays, Oct. 12 and 19.

Many bright stars and constellations are visible at this time of year, including the Summer Triangle, Pegasus the Winged Horse, and Andromeda the Chained Maiden. Plus, Jupiter and Saturn will be visible in the evening sky.

The planetarium opens for seating 30 minutes before the show begins. No one will be admitted after the program starts.

The program lasts from 60-90 minutes. The planetarium’s gift shop will be open and, weather permitting, an outdoor observing session will be offered following the program.

Admission to public

programs is \$4 for adults and \$2 for children. Seating is limited and should be reserved by calling 650-5486 or visiting the planetarium’s website at www.mcpstars.org. Tickets are sold at the door.

The planetarium is located at Pierce Middle School, 199 East 70th Ave. Please park and enter on the south side of the building, due to the construction.



Groups may arrange for a private show at the planetarium by calling 650-5486.

October concerts offer a “sneak peek” & more

Whether it’s vocals or instrumental, Merrillville Schools have great music to share with the community!

Choir

Join the Merrillville High School and Pierce Middle School choirs as they invite the public for the “Get Your Can to the Concert” event at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 3, at Reinhart Auditorium.

The event will feature Pierce Middle School seventh and eighth grade choirs under the direction of Theri Shelburne as well as the MHS Concert Choir, Note-

ables and Choralteens under the direction of Melinda Reinhart.

Each ensemble will perform two selections that will offer a “sneak peek” of this year’s choral groups.

Admission for the concert is a canned or non-perishable good or cash donation with proceeds going to the Ross Township Food Pantry.

Orchestra

Festive music awaits at the Thursday, Oct. 10 Halloween-themed concert. Students from grades 7-12 will perform sea-

sonal music with some spooky surprises!

Five different orchestras will perform: seventh and eighth grade orchestras, under the direction of Bethany Borgo; and MHS beginning, intermediate and advanced, under the direction of Diane Rosenthal.

The free concert begins at 7 p.m. in Reinhart Auditorium. Auditorium parking is available on the north side of the high school. Use entrance M to the Hall of Flags and Auditorium lobby.

Renowned composer works with MHS jazz orchestra club

Charley Harrison, UCLA jazz professor and former associate director of the Chicago Jazz Orchestra, one of the top performing groups in the world, recently spent the day with Merrillville High School Orchestra Teacher Diane Rosenthal and her students.

“It was really an invigorating experience to work with Merrillville High School Orchestra students,” said Harrison. “The enthusiasm that all of these kids have for playing music and even learning about jazz is really heartwarming.”

Rosenthal commissioned a piece from Harrison specifically for the after-school jazz orchestra club for its 2020 Indiana State School Music Association (ISSMA) performances.

Harrison topped off his visit by helping the club work through the “Pirate Suite,” music he developed in three movements: “Undeniable Strings,” in the

style of swing; “Strolling the Street Fair,” a ballad; and “Even Pirates Get the Blues,” a blues number.

According to Rosenthal, “It’s pretty special to have a piece written for you and even more unusual to get to work with the composer of the music you are playing. Bach and Beethoven aren’t likely to show up to help us out!”

Harrison also met with students and classes throughout the day, answered questions and helped them learn more about jazz. Harrison even gave out and autographed his CD “Keeping My Composure.”

Alumni Connection



Angelica Knox, MHS class of 2018, reached out to faculty and staff of her alma mater to share some of her post graduate experiences and connect with teachers and students. Knox was a loyal member of the Band of Pirates, freshman mentor and member of the National Honors Society. She now attends Saint Mary’s College in Notre Dame, majoring in international business with a minor in economics. She is a proud member of the Band of the Fighting Irish and ambassador for the Notre Dame Band. “Being a part of the Notre Dame community has been a lifetime goal of mine, and I would like to extend myself to encourage and uplift students in efforts to follow their dreams,” she said.

Newsletter Notes

We hope you’ve enjoyed this edition of Pirate Pride. If you have story ideas, questions or comments, please contact the Corporation’s Public Information Officer at dstuckert@mvs.k12.in.us or 219-650-5477.