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THE TABLE OF CONTENTS

A SAFE ENVIRONMENT... WRITER: LAUREN THRONE	1
PLACING THE ADVANCED... WRITER: ADAM WARREN	2
LEADERS FOR THE FUTURE... WRITER: LEAH THOMPSON	3
A KICK START... WRITER: SAM SAWYER	4
A GRAND OLE TIME... WRITER: SAMANTHA HUEBLER	5
THE LINK LETTER... WRITER: AMBER KELLEY	6

A Safe Environment

With the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year many changes were put into place at Whitehall High School to keep the school as safe as possible for students and staff. Over the summer all of the doors leading to the outside of the school had a new security system installed. This system allows all doors to be automatically locked every day at 7:40 a.m. If a parent, visitor, or student needs to enter the building after this time they are required to push a small silver button that allows the office staff to view who is entering the building before they are let in. There is a button in the office that will lock all the outside doors when pressed, revoking access to the building. Another safety measure

includes all of the teachers being required to wear an identification badge around their neck, and classroom doors must be locked at all times.

Before the recent shootings this fall around the country, Whitehall High School already started to take precautions toward visitors. Recently, the high school focused on lockdown procedures. In the case of a real lockdown each teacher has a list posted in their classroom of steps to take. The teachers were prepared for a variety of different lockdown scenarios. They talked about ways to handle the situations. They were trained at the staff meetings and viewed a presentation given by Officer Travis Bolles. Students and staff would be notified of the lockdown by an announcement on the P.A. system stating, "We are now in lockdown mode." Principal Dale McKenzie anti-

pates that in the case of a real lockdown situation, the word would spread very quickly through students and staff texting each other and the community. During a "class-in-session" lockdown, students will be locked in their classrooms. However, should a lockdown occur during a lunch or breakfast setting, those students in the Viking Center will be encouraged to exit the building in the opposite direction of the threat, with the possibility of running for cover outside of the building. This may mean they go as far as the end of parking lots or surrounding woods. It is a scenario that does not have a definite approach. The concern McKenzie has with this approach is the possibility of students being unaccounted for if their parents were to call the school asking if their child was alright.

Although the law only

(Continues to page 2)



requires two lockdown drills a year, the high school has already had three. Most students have experienced two classroom drills as well as a lockdown scenario in the lunchroom. This was the first year that the high school has had a lockdown drill during lunch periods. McKenzie and Bolles discussed the possibility of it for years, but this year the idea finally became a reality due to the recent shootings across America. During both lockdown drills during lunch periods, Police Chief Roger Squiers, Detective Brandon Mahoney, and Bolles were present to watch and learn regarding movement and exiting. They also visualized what changes could be done to make the procedure better as well as foresee any potential issues. McKenzie said, "We have good cooperation between the police and schools. We work together to provide a safe place for the community. I appreciate the students' cooperation in performing the drills. It's just something we need to practice if anything were to happen."

Writer: Lauren Throne

Placing the Advanced

To a Whitehall High School student, the two letters AP leave students scared. They know with those two letters come immense responsibility, more school work, and much higher expectations. They know that weekly essays are due in AP English and extensive knowledge and

memorization is needed in AP Chemistry. Whitehall High School gives students the opportunity to enroll in these Advanced Placement courses. If juniors receive a recommendation from an English or Science teacher they can join a class where the core expectations are set higher than other classes. Completing these classes with a score of 3, 4, or 5 on the AP exam gives students college credit for that class and an advantage when entering the college environment. In these courses, students learn more about what colleges expect and how much harder they will have to work.

Mrs. Eileen Stoffan teaches AP English and greatly supports the program. "Schools are sometimes judged by three main criteria. How many AP classes a school has, how many students take those classes, and how many students are receiving a three to five on the AP exam." Scores are ranged from one to five, one being the worst and five being the best. In general, students have a harder time with AP classes, but this is understandable since the criteria is much higher. In a normal English class, students are expected to write multiple papers during the course, but in the Whitehall High School AP English course, one essay is expected a week and three research papers need to be written throughout the year. This may put a lot of pressure on students, but it prepares them for college expectations and leaves them feeling accomplished.

AP Chemistry is the other

advanced class that is offered. "It puts you on a higher level of learning and gets you a college credit," says Savannah Parmley. "Thanks to AP Chem, I can earn a math credit and science credit. Both of which I need to graduate," said Libby Gillhespy. Mrs. Deanna Cullen instructs AP Chemistry. Not only does AP Chemistry give students a high school credit for Science and Math, but also a sophomore credit from college for Chemistry.

This year AP English has 26 students and AP Chemistry has 27. The amount of students in AP English has increased over the years from 15 students in 2011, to 17 students in 2012, to the current 27. Stoffan believes that students that take AP English need to take British Literature before taking the advanced course and many of the students in her class now haven't. She also recalls more and more students deciding to take the AP exam, which is probably in part from there being more students in the first place. This year, only four students out of her 26-student class aren't attempting the AP exam, despite it costing \$89.

These advanced classes are giving students the chance to earn college credits before entering college and prepare them for a more challenging environment. This preparation is a powerful advantage for students.

Writer: Adam Warren

Leaders for the Future

Our world is full of leaders, changing the lives of others and making a difference in their schools and communities. Some were born to be leaders, and some *become* a leader. For those who want to improve their leadership skills, there is the American Youth Foundation Leadership Institute. It is held at Camp Miniwanca for Whitehall and Montague students. About 15 sophomores, juniors, and seniors from each school attend.

This program is designed to help guide student leaders to make a positive difference in their community and school while reaching the full potential of their natural talent. The participants gain many skills to become a leader in the world, learn to solve problems as a group, and develop a positive philosophy of life; these are some of the objectives of the program.

This year, from Whitehall, 11 students participated in the program. Sophomores Windsor Marecek, Trip Thommen, Chance Wells, juniors Anna Goddard, Miranda Jacobs, Jordan Jerome, Jordan Loudermilk, Cassie McAllister, Dylan Medendorp, Ryker Morningstar, and senior Nick DeCouto were chosen to represent Whitehall. They were chosen by Mr. McKenzie, Mrs. Mallory, and Mrs. Hoffman. Some students showed an interest in the program, and the three adults sat down together and chose students off of a list of names. The

sophomores experienced their first year of the camp while the juniors returned for a second year. The second year students acted as peer mentors to the incoming sophomores. These students learned many skills and techniques at the camp. “I could go on for years about all the skills I’ve learned at camp, but one of them sticks out. This skill, if you could call it that, is their motto, ‘My own self, at my very best, all the time’. I learned this the first day of camp my sophomore year, and to this day, I live my life around it. It taught me to always be myself, give my all, and never stop doing it,” said Medendorp. Many things inspire these future leaders. “One thing that inspires me to be a leader is all of the past role models I have had. I want to make a positive impact on everyone just like my role models made on me,” said Morningstar. The students also enjoy many things about participating in the leadership program. “I enjoyed the program a lot. It was cool to get to know all the Montague kids and also the other Whitehall kids too. We all were able to learn and grow together. At the beginning of the program, we were all really shy and uncomfortable with each other, but by the end we were all friends,” said McAllister. Also, many of the participants enjoyed being a part of the program. “I honestly never thought of it as a camp. To me, Miniwanca is a home. I felt welcomed and loved from the first day I showed up, and each day I went to camp, I got on that bus not to miss school, but to go to a place I love and to learn more exciting ways to put on the giant fourth-grade camp at the end!” said Medendorp.

During this program, students do a number of things. They attend about six

seminars during the school year that cover areas ranging from team challenge training to servant leadership. Students also practice their leadership skills by mentoring elementary and middle school students. The participants also receive many benefits from the program such as skills in education, having an effect of their local community, and an addition to a college application or academic résumé. At the end of the program in April, the students run a camp for fourth graders of Whitehall and Montague to practice all of the leadership techniques they have learned over the school year. The program participants work with half of the Whitehall and Montague students one day, and then the rest of students come the next day. In large and small groups, leaders have the kids participate in many team-building activities. The fourth graders had a wonderful time at camp, and many parents told the leadership participants that all the fourth graders talked about at the dinner table was camp. “Even though it was cold and raining, the kids were still laughing and having fun,” said McAllister.

Also, they will also be given a scholarship to attend the National Leadership Conference. This is a week long program for 15-18 year old students, which is also held at Camp Miniwanca. The participants at the conference are involved in activities that will give them a picture of how to return to their communities with a plan for making a difference. Assisting the

professional staff, the Leadership Institute participants will use their training at the conference in the area of workshops and activities.

Each day, new leaders enter the world of leadership to help make a difference in the community. Some leaders continue to grow as tall as buildings and make a difference in our state. With the help of the Leadership Institute, many of these leaders continue to grow past the height of skyscrapers and climb higher than the sky to make huge impacts, not only in their community and state, but all across the world. The leadership institute prepares new leaders each and every year; they prepare our leaders

A Kick Start

As the spring sports season arrives, teams begin to bond, condition, and prepare to win games. Along with preparing for the season, Whitehall High School introduces a new girl's Junior Varsity soccer coach.

Just five days before the start of the spring soccer season, Whitehall girls' JV soccer coach Deron Hunter resigned from the position. With less than a week, Athletic Director Greg Russell had to quickly post an advertisement for the job, set up interviews to quickly find a person to fill the position. After only two people applied for the position, Russell, along with girls' varsity Soccer

Coach Dan Nichols, held interviews for the two candidates. After the interview process, they made a decision and announced that Ashley Bourdon would receive the position of girls JV soccer coach for the 2013 spring sports season.

Bourdon is a 2012 graduate of Whitehall High School, and has had a passion for soccer most of her life. She has played soccer for 11 years. Bourdon began playing in White Lake Youth Soccer Clubs and moved to play soccer for Whitehall High School. She now plays soccer at Muskegon Community College where she also attends school. She said that her team from MCC is very different from any team that she has played on before. "The girls were all so different from my teammates at Whitehall." She said, "...so it was interesting to play with them and be able to come together as a team." This year the MCC girl's soccer team made it to nationals, which was a huge accomplishment. Bourdon said it was an unbelievable season, and she was



Bourdon in her 2013 MCC soccer uniform

proud to be a part of such a great team.

Bourdon is also excited to come back and be a part of Whitehall soccer again. She said she was happy to have received the job. The job was offered to her through her former Whitehall coach, Dan Nichols. He encouraged her to try out for the position, and she took an interest in the offer. She said that she was glad she took advantage of opportunity, and that it is exciting to be back at Whitehall. Russell and Nichols both agreed that Bourdon was a great choice for the position. They thought that she had a great attitude and a lot to bring to the program. They were also impressed with her skill in the sport and her use of her life skills. Also the fact that she was a former Whitehall soccer player made Russell and Nichols comfortable with their decision because she was already familiar with Whitehall's program. So far, Bourdon has enjoyed her time coaching the girls. She said that she was nervous at first because she didn't know what to expect, but now that she has gotten to know the group of girls she loves working with them. She was impressed by how much the girls improve each day and also by the girls' positive attitudes.

The recent weather has been a challenge for the girls to practice and play in. The rainy conditions have left them with many cancelled games and practicing indoors. Bourdon said that this is a challenge because playing indoors is very different from being on the field. However, she said that the girls all manage to have positive attitudes about the situation. "I am so

lucky!" said Bourdon. "I am blessed with an awesome, athletic group of girls."

Overall, Bourdon has concluded that she enjoys her new job, and she hopes this will be a job she can continue in future years.

Writer: Sam Sawyer



Bourdon during the Whitehall vs. Hart game that took place on April 30

A Grand Ole Time

This year was a success for Whitehall Business Professionals of America participants. Twenty-eight students made it past the Regional Competition level on to the next level, State. The State Leadership Conference was March 21-24 at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids. Students involved in BPA came from all across the state of

Michigan to attend this conference. Members listened to speakers discuss topics on business and marketing and how to pursue a career in business. Colleges and universities set up booths and students were able to walk around and talk to representatives and learn about the programs they offered at their campuses. At the BPA formal dinner, all members and their advisors sat around a table and had a three-course meal while the current BPA state officers gave speeches and announced the next year's officers. After the dinner, students strolled into a ballroom where the formal dance was being held, much like a homecoming dance. In between their events and legacy launchers, students were allowed to swim in the pool, workout in the gym, visit local museums, or walk around Grand Rapids in the brisk March air. On Sunday morning, the finalists and National Leadership Conference qualifiers were announced on stage and given plaques. From Whitehall,

six students received awards and four are attending the National Leadership Conference in Orlando, Florida this May. Samantha Huebler and Megan Stout placed 7th in their event, Global Marketing Team. The national qualifiers are Brandon Ketchum for Database Applications, Kayla Myers for Advanced Interview Skills, Ashley Ward for Interview Skills, and Hannah Potter for Graphic Design Promotion. Myers said, "I'm really excited for Nationals this year in Orlando. We are staying right at one of the Disney World hotels. We get to visit all the other Disney parks, water parks, and Universal Studios. I can't wait to meet lots of new people and spend time with some of my fellow Whitehall BPA members not to mention laying around soaking up the sun."

These students are thrilled to represent Whitehall, Michigan, as they compete in their events at the national level.

Writer: Samantha Huebler



The group of Whitehall students at the State Leadership Conference pose outdoors before the formal dinner and dance

The Link Letter

Throughout the freshmen’s first year in high school, they created new friendships, experiences, and ultimately new opinions. The 2012-2013 school year was the first year of the Link Crew. This year was the base of its first impression. There were a wide range of responses to it from the freshmen because there were many things to learn and adjust to. Some agreed that the organization helped them through their first year of high school and others were simply indifferent.

A freshman, Caleb Tallquist, said he thoroughly enjoyed the meetings with his Link Leaders. “I thought what we did was fun, but we didn’t really do very much. I wish we could have done more fun things.”

Madison Vold on the other hand felt uninterested in the events the Link Crew provided. “It was alright, but I didn’t care for the activities we did.” Vold conveyed.

There is always a freshman who takes the experiences exactly as they are intended; helpful and desired.

Brook Klingel said, “The activities were very fun. Link helped a little with the transition to high school, especially at the beginning of the year.”

With all of the different opinions and expectations that came from others about the Link organization, their help was prominently appreciated by many and looked well upon by administrators and faculty. It was regarded as a program that could grow with Whitehall High School, because helping others was the unique piece of Link Crew philosophy. Mr. and Mrs. Goodrich’s goals for the Link Crew of next year are to provide new activities and to grow as a school.

Writer: Amber Kelley



One group gathers together for an activity

This newsletter is produced by the Viking Communication Class of Whitehall High School. Students in grades nine through twelve learn various skills producing this newsletter. Writing, photography, layout, interviewing, and communication skills are just some of the advantages students gain from participating in this class.

-VALHALLA-

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