



WYOMISSING AREA

# SPARTAN SCOOP online

Inspiring Excellence, One Spartan at a Time!

## Wyomissing Area Welcomes New Faculty





**Tiffany Bixler** has been working at Wyomissing Area for the past three years with students in grades two and three, and we are excited to have her join the first grade team at the Elementary Center this year. Prior to becoming a Spartan, she taught elementary grades in Susquehanna Township, PA and Fayetteville, NC. She loves working at Wyomissing Area because of the family-like community and appreciates seeing the community and families pull together for events such as the Fourth of July celebration! Mrs. Bixler enjoys being able to share her passion for learning and reading with our younger Spartan students. Outside of school she enjoys reading, gardening, and almost anything outdoors!

**Dustin Caruso** is the Instructional Support and Social Skills teacher for students in grades seven through twelve, teaching students social and emotional skills. Before coming to Wyomissing Area, Dustin worked locally in the Reading and Twin Valley School Districts for over 15 years, and served as the Director of Special Education at a New Story school. Outside of work, Dustin enjoys spending time with his wife and two sons, going to sporting events, coaching baseball and soccer, and vacationing.

**Lisa Faust** is currently a Reading Specialist at both WREC and the Jr./Sr. High School. She loves to read and hopes to instill that same passion for reading in her students. She believes that there is a book or genre out there that could interest everyone and sometimes we just need a nudge in the right direction. Lisa is a proud graduate of West Chester University and is also a huge lover of all things crafts. She loves a good DIY project or personalizing something with her cricut.

**Adrienne Feeser** is the new art teacher joining the Art Department at WREC and the Jr./Sr. High School. She is a Kutztown graduate and has been teaching art for over 12 years. Before coming

to Wyomissing Area, Ms. Feeser taught for the Parkland School District as well as in the state of Vermont. When she is not in the classroom, she enjoys hiking, gardening, painting, and spending time with her one-year-old son.

**Angela Flores**, a native Spanish speaker born in Puerto Rico, developed her love of languages early in life as she interpreted for her parents after immigrating to the United States. During college at Slippery Rock University she studied abroad at the University of Alcalá de Henares in Madrid, Spain to broaden her knowledge of a culture different from her own. After graduating from Slippery Rock, she began her teaching career outside of Erie, PA and furthered her studies in Spanish at West Chester University. We are excited about the expertise and experiences she brings and can share with our students as the new Spanish teacher at the Jr./Sr. High School. Outside of school, she enjoys traveling, sightseeing, reading, cooking and trying new things.

**Christopher Grasso** teaches chemistry at the Jr./Sr. High School. Before joining the Wyomissing Area team, he worked at Upper Darby High School where he taught chemistry, biology, genetics, and physical science. Outside of school Mr. Grasso enjoys spending time with his wife and daughter. He is an avid Philly sports fan and loves live music. Little known fact, Mr. Grasso can dunk.

**Kristin Holst** joins the Wyomissing Area faculty as a Special Education teacher. She chose this path because she has always enjoyed working and advocating for individuals with disabilities. Before working at Wyomissing Area, she was a special education administrator in Berks County and Lehigh County and taught special education in Virginia. Outside of the classroom she enjoys spending time with her husband, children, and dogs and as well as tutoring for the Children's Dyslexia Center of Reading.

After twenty years of teaching in the Antietam School District, **Dawn Laub** joins our Spartan team this year teaching sixth grade social studies and writing at West Reading Elementary Center. Her passions include teaching and learning and she is always looking for opportunities to grow as an educator and learn new ways to inspire her students. Outside of school, she is a dog lover and a Dallas Cowboys fan who enjoys spending time hiking with her eight-year-old dog, Piper. She also occupies her time with her family and being involved in her church.

**Lauren Schwartz** is a learning support teacher for students at the Jr./Sr. High School. She has worked within the District since 2016 as a paraprofessional and long term-substitute in the Special Education Department, and we are excited to have her as a member of our professional staff. Outside of school she enjoys spending time with friends and family and being outdoors. If she is not working in the yard or on a house project, you can find her sitting by the pool with a good book!

**Bridget Stevens** is a Speech-Language Pathologist for Wyomissing Area. She works with students on their communication skills which can include speech sounds, language skills, and voice fluency skills. Bridget has worked for Wyomissing Area before, but most recently worked for the BCIU, and is excited to work with students in a variety of grades again. When not at work, she enjoys watercolor painting, interior decorating, reading, and walking with her two Siberian Huskies.

**Heather Whitmore** is a new addition to our second grade team at the Wyomissing Hills Elementary Center and we are excited to welcome her to the Spartan community.

**Julie Winkler** joined the English Department at the Jr./Sr. High School last school year and is currently teaching seventh-grade Writing Workshop and reading class. Prior to teaching at Wyomissing Area, she taught high school English at several Lancaster county schools as a long-term substitute. Before becoming a teacher, she worked as an intern for the National Basketball Association and the Denver Nuggets, was the owner of a children’s bookstore and raised her two daughters, who are now 21 and 23. She has a cat named Pumpkin and a big fluffy Great Pyrenees named Sofie, loves to read and write, and is thrilled to be a part of the Wyomissing Area Spartan family!

In addition to these wonderful new additions to our professional staff at Wyomissing Area, we are thankful to welcome long-term substitutes, faculty in new roles across the district, and essential support staff to the Spartan team.

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### **Wyomissing Area Administration Participates in Service Learning Opportunity**

This summer, members of the Wyomissing Area School District’s administrative team partnered with New Journey Community Outreach to pack and distribute food to those in need. Along with the 150 bags of lunch that were packed during this event, a clothing drive was also provided for community members. Our administrators were grateful to participate in the event and hope to return in the future. Dr. Jones, principal of the Wyomissing Area Jr./Sr. High School, would love to see the opportunity expand to include students in the future as well. We are fortunate at Wyomissing Area to have a community that wants to give back and help others, and we look forward to more opportunities to do so in the future. We would like to give a special thank you to Rachel Kuhn with VOICEup Berks who coordinated this great volunteer opportunity for WASD.

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## Opening Day 2021 at the Wyomissing Area School District



Opening day of the 2021-2022 school year marked the first time since 2019 that our entire district faculty was able to safely gather together in person and prepare for the arrival of our students and the beginning of a new school year. In addition to a warm welcome from district administration, teachers were greeted with presentations from Board Member Terrie Taylor, the Executive Director of the Wyomissing Area Education Foundation, Molly Murrill, and Brad and Barbara Hall, recipients of the United Way 2021 Wilbur H. Doran award. Mr. and Mrs. Hall shared their passion for their work with the United Way and the various ways the United Way supports local programs. The day's keynote speaker, Anne Brown, President and CEO of the Cook Center for Human Connection, provided insight into the ways the Cook Center works to support students, families, and our school community. A non-profit foundation committed to preventing suicide, improving mental health support, and encouraging human connections, the Cook Center supports ParentGuidance.org, a community mental health resource for parents. This resource

offers parents access to licensed therapists delivering on-demand e-courses on topics like living with a child with depression, identifying anxiety, and coping with grief and loss to help families understand the mental health needs of their children. These valuable discussions and presentations on opening day were an important part of preparing to welcome students back to school. It is our goal to give students, families, and teachers the tools they need to be successful as we reflect, rebuild, and reignite our passions for teaching, learning, and excellent education.

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### Meet the Teacher at Open House!



Faculty and staff at the Wyomissing Area School District were happy to welcome families to all three buildings at the meet-the-teacher and open house nights throughout September. At Wyomissing Hills Elementary Center, families were excited to meet the dedicated teachers that work with their students each day and to learn about a day in the life of a student at WHEC. Families learned about the joke of the day during the morning announcements and the blue ticket rewards for good behavior through the PBIS program. At West Reading Elementary Center's Open House families were introduced to the recently approved Olivet Boys' and Girls' Club after-school program (featured in the next article). At the Jr./Sr High School Open House families were able to appreciate festive hallway decorations on display during senior high Spirit Week. District faculty and staff look forward to the opportunity to meet with families and build relationships between home and school each year, and this year's events were a success!

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## West Reading Elementary Center Partners with Olivet Boys' and Girls' Club



Starting in late September of this year, the West Reading Elementary Center has partnered with the Olivet Boys' and Girls' Club to establish an Olivet after-school program at the WREC building. The program will begin serving students in grades five and six but will eventually open to students in grades three through seven. The program will feature activities such as an academic "power hour" for students to work on homework and to develop social/emotional learning skills as well as recreational time in the gymnasium or the school playground. The after-school program will provide a structured environment for students while their parents are still at work. Jamie Chimelewski will take on the role of the Site Director and said, "I am thrilled to be able to bring to the table my many years of experience working with and advocating for the youth of our community. I believe that through Olivet's partnership with the Wyomissing Area School District, my team and I will be able to make a lasting, meaningful impact on the lives of those whom we serve." Principal of the West Reading Elementary Center Dr. Babb stated, "I am very excited to be partnering with the Olivet Boys' and Girls' Club to enhance our after-school programming at WREC. We have the opportunity to pilot a new Olivet programming model that involves a great degree of collaboration between the WREC staff and our partners from Olivet. Our students are really going to benefit from it."

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## WHEC Reads



WHEC has kicked off the 2021-2022 school year in a wonderful way. Mrs. DeRenzo welcomed our community of readers back to WHEC with passion and determination. She kicked off the year with a school-wide read-aloud, “Maybe.” This beautiful story helped our WHEC readers understand that anything is possible, and our dreams can be achieved with lots of hard work. What a great mantra! This positivity has filled classrooms with smiles, laughter, and hard work.

Our teachers have been dedicated to implementing a Balanced Literacy framework for reading and writing! This research-based approach to literacy provides our learners with opportunities to discuss the text and grow as readers and writers with deeper comprehension and connections to text and genres of reading and writing. Our teachers’ literature-rich classroom environments and huge selection of diverse texts help our WHEC readers and writers develop independence. We are certainly enjoying reading, discussing, and developing our love of literature in every WHEC classroom!



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## Wyomissing Area Participates in Science Research Institute

The Wyomissing Area School District prides itself on the ways our staff and students get involved in our community and our partnership with the Science Research Institute (SRI) at Albright College is continuing to create new opportunities for staff and students alike. In recent years, Wyomissing Area teacher Dr. Brian Liskey has worked with the Science Research Institute providing him an opportunity to share his love of science with students by bringing science into the real world. With Dr. Liskey's guidance, Wyomissing Area students' most recent involvement with SRI has been participating in research on the Susquehanna River to detect water quality issues. Over the summer, the watershed research team worked with the EPA and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission to study the impact of invasive species, specifically the snakehead, on the river's water quality. Invasive species like the snakehead are detrimental to native ecosystems because they have little to no natural predators and out-compete the native fish species. While working with the watershed team, Dr. Liskey and his students used a technique called QPCR to see if the snakehead DNA was present in regions of the Susquehanna River. By detecting if the snakehead's DNA was present, the team could assess where in the river the invasive species was located. Interesting enough, this is the same technology used to detect the COVID-19 virus. Dr. Liskey is excited to continue his involvement with the SRI program and hopes to give more Wyomissing Area students the ability to research the many fields of science through this partnership.

In addition to the hands-on science exploration and research opportunities this program provides for students, Wyomissing Area is fortunate to offer a professional learning experience to a group of faculty members as part of this partnership, as well. This Total Experience Learning (TEL) offers dynamic learning opportunities for WASD educators to impact instructional practice and student engagement and we are thrilled to have participation from faculty members across the district. Participants of this program will complete courses over the next twelve months which will culminate in a summer internship at the Science Research Institute at Albright College next summer. Additionally, our faculty participants will earn a certificate in Educational Innovation and Entrepreneurship. We are excited to grow our instructional practices in support of all students.

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## Introducing the Wyomissing Area Hope Squad



This year, the Wyomissing Area School District is excited to develop a Hope Squad. The mission of the Hope Squad is to reduce youth suicide through education, training, and peer intervention. The Hope Squad will help train students and staff to recognize warning signs in others, will seek to build positive relationships among peers and faculty, and will work to promote a positive school culture surrounding mental health. This peer-to-peer program is aimed to empower students and will be advised by Dr. Woodard, Mrs. Quinlivan, and Mrs. Godek. Dr. Woodard shares that "the Wyomissing Area School District is the second school in Pennsylvania to develop the Hope Squad and we are grateful for the Cook Center's grant funding and research-based curriculum to guide this work". For more information please visit the link: <https://hopesquad.com/>. We look forward to learning about the work this new group is doing.

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## The Jr./Sr. High School Continues Partnership with Morgan Corporation



Students in their senior year at Wyomissing Area and Wilson High School have the opportunity to participate in a welding internship program at Morgan Corporation in Morgantown, PA. Morgan Corporation is a national company that supplies truck bodies all across the United States. This internship allows students to get a head start on a possible career path post-graduation and can help them explore what they may want to do after high school. Wyomissing Area currently has two students participating in this program and is excited to see more students get involved in the future. Students in the program begin their day and coursework with traditional classes at the Jr./Sr. High School and are dismissed to Morgan Corporation for their afternoon class time before returning to school for end-of-day dismissal. The first few weeks spent at the facility include training sessions and classroom learning, as there is a lot of new information for students to learn. Additionally, students participate in a series of hands-on training activities, qualifying tests, and various screenings before they are allowed to begin on the work floor. Once they pass the initial training, they can begin completing welding tasks and are mentored by professionals at Morgan Corporation. Participating students earn high school credit through this program but also gain professional skills and experience. Even better, students that perform well in the program may have the opportunity to continue employment with Morgan Corporation after graduation! Wyomissing Area is proud to offer this unique and valuable opportunity to our Spartans allowing them to develop valuable skills and prepare to enter the workforce.

## Wyomissing Area Spartans Participate in ROTC Program



Taking advantage of community ties and building relationships between schools, Wyomissing Area is fortunate to partner with Wilson School District to provide Wyomissing Area students the opportunity to participate in the JROTC program at Wilson High School. This partnership allows Wyomissing Area students the opportunity to step outside of their comfort zone and experience new opportunities through the program. Currently, there are seven students from Wyomissing Area that participate in the JROTC program. The students travel to Wilson High School for the beginning portion of the school day to participate and resume their traditional coursework at Wyomissing Area when they return mid-morning. Utilizing elective spaces in student schedules allows for the flexibility to provide this program.

The JROTC program is designed to teach high school students the value of citizenship, leadership, service to the community, personal responsibility, and a sense of self-esteem, accomplishment, teamwork, and self-discipline. Students at Wyomissing Area have chosen to do this program for many of these reasons. Harper Ostrich, a ninth-grade student, says "I chose to do JROTC for many reasons, but more specifically, because I grew up watching my father work in the Air Force. I wanted to bring citizens in our small community and beyond a better sense and representation of patriotism." While the JROTC program can help prepare students for a career in the military, it also does so much more. Wyomissing Area student Tad Sincavage states: "I've been able to meet so many new people that I wouldn't have met without JROTC. The first sergeant and major are amazing people and are willing to help us with anything."

The partnership with Wilson School District has allowed Wyomissing Area students the opportunity to join a valuable program that would not be available to them otherwise. We are thankful that students get to meet new people, learn from new teachers, and experience a new and unique learning environment. The JROTC program is something the students take pride in participating in and we are excited to see this opportunity grow.



WYOMISSING AREA EDUCATION FOUNDATION

*Enriching Education in the Wyomissing Area School District*

Welcome back to school! Wyomissing Area Education Foundation (WAEF) is looking forward to a new school year that brings chances to enhance educational opportunities for the Wyomissing Area School District. Please reach out to WAEF's Executive Director, Molly McCullough Murrill, if you have ideas for grants that will provide enrichment for our students. WAEF's website, [www.wyoarea-foundation.org](http://www.wyoarea-foundation.org), is where you can find grant applications and is a great source of information about what WAEF does with and for the district.

WAEF's Board of Directors meets monthly throughout the school year, and our committees - Executive Committee, Finance Committee, Grants & Scholarships Committee, Student Committee, and Toast Committee - have differing meeting schedules throughout the year to achieve our goals. If you would like more information about getting involved with WAEF's Board or committees, please email [mmurrill@wyoarea.org](mailto:mmurrill@wyoarea.org).

WAEF is pleased to be providing a simple way for teachers to get the supplies they need for their classrooms with a new fund this year called the Classroom Wishes Fund. Teachers can apply for support from this fund for items found on Amazon - for things they might have otherwise purchased out of their own pockets. The money for this fund was raised during the May 2021 Blue & White online auction. If you would like to contribute to this fund, please go to our website or contact Molly!

WAEF's mission is to support excellence in education in the Wyomissing Area School District by providing an enriching educational experience that expands the knowledge and maximizes the potential of every student.

## About the Authors



As the Wyomissing Area School District continues to develop the Internship Program, we are fortunate to have talented students work with our Communications team to develop the articles you read in each edition of The Spartan Scoop. Our students are driven and predominantly self-guided and have the opportunity to attend district events, visit classrooms and teachers, and share positive experiences and stories about the great work in our district. Passionate students like these are a great addition to our Communications team and developing our social media posts and newsletter stories is a great experience for them.

**Emma Care** is a senior at Wyomissing Area Jr./Sr. High school, and is a returning Communication's intern this year. She is a teammate on the girls' soccer and lacrosse team and is a committed member of the environmental club, service club, Model United Nations club, Mini-THON, student tutoring, NHS, and is Chief Editor of the Wyomissing Area High School yearbook The Colophon. In the classroom, Emma strives for academic and personal excellence and loves to push herself to new limits. In Emma's free time, she enjoys volunteering throughout the community and spending time with loved ones. After high school, she plans to attend college on a pre-law or business track, and plans to use the skills from this student internship to guide her along the way. Emma values hard work in school and life but embraces the importance of excitement and fun even more.

**Julian DiMaio** is a senior that participates in football, baseball, and wrestling, and is a member of the service club. He plans to attend college after high school to study architecture and business. Julian chose this internship to follow the athletic department more closely and to help recognize the accomplishments of our Spartan athletes.

**Olivia Fisher**, a senior at Wyomissing Area, enjoys participating on the Wyomissing Area Cross Country team and as a member of the chess club after school. The Communications internship will be an opportunity for her to build skills and experience in public outreach and social media campaigning, as well as online media design and journalism. She hopes to utilize her interests in online video media, SEO, and online algorithms in an exciting way via this program. Olivia is eager to work with the other interns this year and participate in the Communications internship!

**Jabrea Flowers** is a senior and is actively involved in our school community. Jabrea serves as the High School Student Council President, a Mini-THON Chairperson, and a Class Officer for the Class of 2022. Additionally, she enjoys participating in the environmental club, service club, the WAEF Student Committee, and serving as a student representative on the Wyomissing Borough Council. Athletically, Jabrea is a member of the soccer team and runs indoor and outdoor track. Her future plans include attending a four-year college to double major in international business and communications with a minor in sports management. She chose to pursue this internship to learn more about the Communications Department and to develop her professional writing skills. She also looks forward to getting to visit the other school buildings and seeing the other activities that are going on throughout the rest of the district and the community.

**Victoria Heliodoro** is a senior who enjoys playing basketball and throwing track and field. Being involved at school is something that she loves and she participates in multiple clubs including the Mini-THON committee, environmental club, service club, chorale, Camerata, dance club, Big Spartan Little Spartan, the Gay-Straight Alliance club, and the WAEF Student Committee. Next year Vicky hopes to attend either Temple University or the University of Pittsburgh to major in business and is considering a minor in environmental studies. Vicky chose this internship to help

strengthen her communication skills as well as the ability to form connections with others and improve her networking skills.

**Isabel Marshall** is a member of the senior class and is a natural leader. She is a captain of the soccer and lacrosse teams, the Treasurer of the High School Student Council, a member of the National Honor Society and Spanish National Honor Society, Spanish club, and service club. Izzy plans to attend college and is currently considering studying analytical mathematics, finance, or engineering. She chose this internship because she would like to explore the field of communications, and practicing interviewing and reporting skills will only help to enhance her confidence, writing capabilities, and experiences in the business world.

### Communications Coordinator, Meghan Tierney



**Ms. Meghan Tierney** is the mathematics Department Chair at the Jr./Sr. High School in her eighth year in the Wyomissing Area School District. She received her bachelor's degree from Albright College and earned a master's degree in Teacher Leadership through the University of Delaware. Currently, she is pursuing a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction Supervision at Gwynedd Mercy University. In addition to her role as a classroom teacher, she advises the the Model UN Club and the National Honor Society, and serves as the Communications Coordinator for the school district. Meghan really enjoys the opportunities she has to work with students both



in and out of the classroom and loves being a Spartan. Outside of school, Meghan enjoys spending time at the beach and being with family and friends.

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