



# Mount Vernon City Schools

## DISTRICT NEWS

Fall 2015

Connecting Our Community



### STEM at MVMS

Mount Vernon Middle School is offering two new classes to students this year. STEM and Music+STEM are innovative classes that give students the opportunity to learn in new and exciting ways.

#### WHAT IS STEM?

STEM is an acronym that stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

We have the challenge of using technology and everyday materials to engineer projects and learn the science and math behind it! Everyday is a hands-on day! Our focus will be on the 21st century skills of creative thinking, collaboration and communication. Together, students work in teams to use the engineering design process of asking questions, imagining solutions, planning, designing and creating prototypes, testing and then improving them. Dream it. Design it. Do it.



#### THEN WHAT IS MUSIC + STEM?

Most of us know what to expect in a music class, but what happens when you add Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (and possibly more)? It's not an easy question to answer, but here's a snapshot of some of what will be happening in our classroom this year...

*Continued on page 7 ►►*

### Big Little Brother Program

Jacket Football launched a mentorship program on Sunday, August 2, 2015, at Hiawatha Water Park. Thirteen senior boys were paired with thirteen sixth grade boys from Mount Vernon Middle School in hopes that a mentoring relationship would profit both groups. Currently, in the third month of the program, ties have both been strengthened and deepened through weekly visitations. "The program's motto serves as its foundation: Looking beyond ourselves and our own experience will make us better people, but looking to seek opportunities of service and following through with commitment will make us a better community." Hopefully, this philosophy takes root with all involved.

Aside from the pool party with the team in August, the little brothers attended a team meal, received a matching jersey, and were introduced before the home game on September 18, 2015. The true heart of the program, however, lies within the weekly visits at the Middle School. Each senior player commits a class period a week. He spends time with the sixth grader, one-on-one, to check on academics and activities, and conversations include motivational discussions, helpful tutoring, and inspirational fellowship. Those visits will continue through the end of the season, but experiences should last long after footballs are kicked, thrown, or received.

While no program can guarantee success, and most cannot guarantee success in a measurable way, this program should profit those involved for years to come.



### IN THIS ISSUE:

- 1 STEM at MVMS
- 1 Big Little Brother Program
- 2 Educational Lessons Learned Down on the Farm
- 3 The Winds of Change
- 3 A Great Start: Columbia Elementary 2015-2016
- 4 Miss Fishy Brings Home the Silver
- 4 Twin Oak Fit-a-Thon
- 5 The Monarchs of Wiggin Street
- 5 Community Involvement Makes a Difference in Our School
- 5 Substitutes Needed
- 6 School Closings and Delays
- 7 The Game That Changed Recess: Ga Ga Ball
- 8 McTeacher's Night
- 8 Fall Senior Citizens Luncheon



# UPCOMING EVENTS

## DECEMBER 2015

**COLUMBIA ELEMENTARY**  
14 • 7pm Holiday Program  
Faith Baptist Church

**DAN EMMETT ELEMENTARY**  
16 • 7pm Holiday Program  
MVNU Chapel

**EAST ELEMENTARY**  
10 • 7pm Holiday Program  
MVNU Chapel

**PLEASANT ST. ELEMENTARY**  
15 • 7pm Holiday Program  
MVNU Chapel

**TWIN OAK ELEMENTARY**  
17 • 7pm Holiday Program  
MVNU Chapel

**WIGGIN ST. ELEMENTARY**  
15 • 6pm Kindergarten  
Gingerbread Man Program  
WS Gymnasium  
17 • 7pm Holiday Program  
Rosse Hall, Kenyon

**MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
9 • 7pm Orchestra Concert  
HS Theater  
14 • 7pm Choir Concert  
MVNU Chapel  
17 • 7pm Band Concert  
HS Theater

**HIGH SCHOOL**  
10 • 7pm Orchestra Concert  
HS Theater  
14 • 7pm Choir Concert  
MVNU Chapel  
16 • 7pm Band Concert  
HS Theater

Call 740-397-7422 or email Terry Streby at [tstreby@mvcsd.us](mailto:tstreby@mvcsd.us) for times and other details regarding events

## Educational Lessons Learned Down on the Farm

*A message from Superintendent William Seder*

We recently took our granddaughters, Leighton and Ava, to a good old fashioned farm festival. Television and computer games were replaced for the day with feeding farm animals and meandering through a giant straw obstacle course. The girls launched potatoes in a spud slinger, slid down a corn crib chute, and played in a giant bed of shelled corn.

One of the highlights of our trip was navigating our way through a giant corn maze. After several wrong turns and numerous dead ends, we found ourselves in the middle of the maze with the opportunity to climb to an observation stand. From there we could see the entire maze and were able to analyze where we were, where we wanted to go, and what we needed to do to get there.

The maze reminded me of how our education system often works. We look for solutions by heading in new directions and by seeking out innovative ideas, often only to find ourselves at a dead end or back to where we started. We tried the PARCC and Common Core trail, which led to new teacher and principal evaluation systems. Along the way we added the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, Rimp plans, College Credit Plus and more.

Some of these paths lead us to a better place and some don't, but in spite of the mandates that lead us to the quest for a new path or better way, Mount Vernon City Schools remain focused on the basics and ask: "where are we?, where do we want to be?, and what we need to do to get there."

We have invested in building the foundation for our own type of observation stand by implementing all-day/everyday kindergarten and adding elementary reading tutors to improve literacy. We have targeted our resources towards new textbooks in the crucial subject areas of English and Math. We strengthened our commitment to gifted education, and kept our focus on Quality Instruction. We are in the process of securing the skills and expertise of elementary school social workers to help meet the needs of the whole child.

As we left the farm, we let each of our granddaughters choose a pumpkin to take home. It was fun to notice that they each selected very different pumpkins. One was short and plump with a small stem while the other was tall and skinny with distinct markings. Seen through the eyes of each little girl, her pumpkin was beautiful!

Just as we each see things through our own lens, we also learn in different ways. Trying to teach every child by using the same methods doesn't work. It is up to us to find out how we can best reach each student. We may need to adapt and offer new and unique ways for our kids if we are going to help them succeed.

The Mount Vernon School District is on a mission to make learning more relevant for every student, and to improve our graduation rates. We are only successful when all of our students enjoy the benefits of a quality education. The future of our district depends on us being able to find new and innovative ways to provide greater educational opportunities for all students. And we will.

Take Care...Bill



## The Winds of Change *Curriculum Director Scott Will*

Welcome to the 2015-16 year at Mount Vernon City Schools. It has been quite a busy start to the year with the winds of fall already upon us and the wisp of winter knocking at the door, education is occurring at full steam.

Our students at the elementary and Middle Schools are engaged in the first year of a new English Language Arts program. Journeys has been adopted at the elementary and Collections at the middle school. Our mission in these adoptions is centered on student growth and the continued drive to provide our students with a hearty curriculum that engages their learning, and facilitates application and problem solving with the concepts that are provided in that curriculum as well as the wonderful instruction by our classroom teachers.

Students, parents and educators have received a breath of fresh air as Ohio has shifted away PARCC assessments and relying

solely on using the AIR (American Institute of Research) testing platform. Our students and staff will have a one-stop platform for our state assessments as well as assessments that are solely end-of-course exams. The voice of parents and educators had a strong impact in this shift and we not only thank you for your voice, but for your support of our staff and students in these testing transitions.

As we continue into a new age of education with many different choices being available for students, our continued charge is to provide all students with educational options that are relevant to their skills and abilities within the resources you provide us on a daily basis. We will continue to evaluate how we serve our students and make adjustments as needed. Your partnership and support is essential in this endeavor.

Thank you for your support of Mount Vernon City Schools and GO JACKETS!



**COLUMBIA ELEMENTARY 2015-2016**

## A Great Start

We are having a great start to the 2015-16 school year at Columbia Elementary School! We truly are blessed to have the best and the brightest students! Before the year even began, we found out that our third grade students performed the best that they have performed on the 2014-15 reading state testing in the past five years! With the addition of 35 new students and 40 incoming kindergarten students, the school is filled with excited Columbia Tigers.

This year, we have implemented a Character and Leadership Education program called "Tiger Up." During this Tiger Up program, each student is assigned a mentor that will follow them over the next two years. Each mentor has a "team" of 8-10 students that are not normally in their homeroom class. This allows the students to create another positive relationship with a staff member in our school. Each month our students meet with their specific mentor for an hour to focus on character and leadership skill development. Following their time with their mentor, our students spend a half hour in an assembly with an expert focusing on a specific character or leadership trait. Our belief is that we have both an educational and social obligation to improve our students and the community in which we live.

To support our classroom instruction and to prepare our students for a global market, we have implemented a weekly technology course for all of our students. In this course our students learn how to safely use the internet, word processing skills, Google Apps for Education (similar to Microsoft Office), and other amazing resources available to them through technology. The skills that our students are learning are progressive in nature to help develop their fluency and ability to integrate technology into their lives in a safe and productive manner.

As a result of our students having different learning needs, we have implemented an Intervention and Enrichment Time on Fridays. During this Intervention and Enrichment Time the Columbia staff engages with students to address these different needs. There is no new instruction during this time but simply strengthening and/or deepening each students' understanding.

Although we have these new improvements for the students at Columbia Elementary, we continue to understand we all are "works in progress." We believe great dialogue, risk taking, and progressive thinking will lead us to our vision of excellence. Fortunately, we have great students, an intuitive instructional team, and a collaborative community to guide us to great success.



## Miss Fishy Brings Home the Silver

Carol Fitzsimons, preschool teacher at Pleasant Street Elementary School, participated in the 20th Annual World Transplant Games in Mar del Plata, Argentina, in August. Over 900 transplant patients from 44 countries took part in the contests this year. Ms. Fitzsimons, affectionately known as "Miss Fishy" to her students, received a kidney transplant in 2000 and has participated in the transplant games since 2001. Competing in swimming events as the only Buckeye athlete, she brought home a silver



medal for Team USA in all four of her individual events: 400 meter freestyle, 200 meter freestyle, 200 meter individual medley and the 50 meter butterfly. "Not only do the games motivate recipients to stay healthy, but exercise has proven to be an important factor in post transplant health," comments Ms. Fitzsimons. She is eager to share the message that organ donation can save lives. Team OHIO will be hosting the next Transplant Games of America June 10-15th in Cleveland.

## Twin Oak Fit-a-Thon

The Twin Oak Fit-a-Thon is a physical fitness event that is held every fall under the direction of the Twin Oak PTO. It's a wonderful opportunity for our Twin Oak students to have fun, engage in extra physical and wellness activities during the school day, and support the PTO and Twin Oak.

For years, the Twin Oak PTO would do a catalog sale filled with merchandise that families and friends bought in order to support their child and the school. Three years ago, the PTO members found an alternative to this fall fundraiser as they searched out ways to involve students in activities that would encourage fitness and fun. The fall Fit-a-Thon has evolved into a successful fundraiser as well as a popular activity that the entire school, students and staff, look forward to each year.

Jerry Clinger, Twin Oak PE teacher, designed stations that all students did over a 90-minute rotation. This year there were relay races, tug of war, exercise ball activities, climbing wall, dancing, jump roping, time to play on the playground equipment, and running on the track. Students brought in sponsors who supported their participation in this event, but all students had the opportunity to be fully engaged in the activities.



The Fit-a-Thon prizes always involve wellness or physical fitness rewards. This year the big prize went to a student who acted as the gym teacher for the day. An even more popular prize this year was that students had lunch with Coach Justin Todd, some of his football players, cheerleaders, and the Yellow Jacket mascot 'Stinger.' It was a great way to end a successful Twin Oak fitness and wellness event. We are fortunate to have the support of our parents and community partners in making an impact in the journey of our Twin Oak students.



## The Monarchs of Wiggin Street

Remember the excitement of meeting your teacher the first day of school in the room where you would spend your first grade year? Well, Wiggin Street first graders arrived in their classrooms and not only met their teachers but their first class project. What better way to peak creative minds than to find aquariums placed around the classroom filled with monarch butterfly eggs and larvae.

Many students had no idea what the creatures in the aquariums were and so began their research to discover what the eggs and larvae were. Through this research, the students learned that these creatures crawling about the tank would eventually become the beautiful Monarch butterfly. The class began to study about the life cycle of the Monarch butterfly, because these creatures sure did not look anything like the butterfly that many of the students chased and attempted to catch during the summer months. Students learned that Monarch butterflies are very beneficial to farmers and gardeners in Ohio by pollinating many of the plants. Students observed the larvae change to the Monarch caterpillar, and were surprised that they feed only on one

plant: milkweed. This led to discussions that if we are going to continue to have Monarch butterflies in Ohio that it is important to protect the habitats that contain the milkweed plant. They also discovered that they would be able to tell the males from the females when they hatched and that their Monarchs would soon take a long migration thousands of miles to Mexico.



The observations of this project led to lessons in the sciences, reading, math, geography and writing as students were able to observe and record the caterpillars as they quickly grew and shed numerous skins. After about 2 weeks, the first graders actually witnessed the larvae pupating and forming their chrysalis'. Finally after another 10-12 days, they watched as the adult butterflies emerged. The students kept tally marks to tell if there were more males or more females. As each butterfly hatched, it was given enough time in the room to dry its wings and become strong enough to fly. Finally, each butterfly was released on the playground or in the butterfly garden so that they could begin their migration south.

## Community Involvement Makes a Difference in Our School



Each year the Dan Emmett Student Leaders work together to organize and undertake many community service projects impacting the Dan Emmett community with the mission to instill the importance of helping others and giving back to our community. Our students learn that you do not have to spend money to make a positive impact in the lives of others as your

time and effort can be the greatest treasure shared. With the mission in place, our students work alongside staff, parents, and other community volunteers to make a difference in the Dan Emmett community. Our projects have created pride in our community and our hope is that each service opportunity will continue to foster and increase community support for the future.

One project that the Dan Emmett Student Leaders participated in last year was raking leaves around the neighborhood. We had a fun and very chilly time raking approximately 10 yards. A second project saw our students spending a January afternoon at the Living Center reading winter stories and making crafts with many of its lovely residents. One of the major service projects during the Spring of last year was working at the Rock Garden at Faith Lutheran Church. Many of our students, as well as parents, got down and dirty with raking, picking up, and moving sticks and rocks. The members of Faith Lutheran then blessed the Student Leaders with a yummy lunch and time of fellowship.

Dan Emmett has many exciting projects planned for this school year as well. Our students and staff are very excited to start working and helping others in our neighborhood and come alive with pride at Dan Emmett Elementary!

## Substitutes Needed

We have substitute employment opportunities available in many areas of the school District: bus drivers, cooks, secretarial, custodial, aides, and teachers. Please go to our website [www.mvcsd.us](http://www.mvcsd.us) and select the Employment Icon. You will be directed to our online application system where you will select your area of interest. This will initiate the online application process. If you should have any questions please call 740-397-7422 for additional support.



## SCHOOL CLOSINGS AND DELAYS

The winter season is upon us. Our district administration, faculty, and staff understand that our decision to open or close schools during inclement weather has a big effect on families. We also understand that our students are better served, both academically and socially, by being in school. But, as always, our top priority is the safety of our students.

### HOW DO WE MAKE OUR DECISION?

Please understand that we make the decision to open or close the schools in bad weather based on a careful analysis of all relevant factors, such as:

- Information on road conditions from transportation staff, adjoining school districts, and local law enforcement. We must give careful consideration to the most dangerous roads in the district; they can be treacherous even if your street or roads looks clear.
- Amount of snow and/or ice accumulated.
- Is the snow and/or ice expected to continue throughout the day.
- Temperature and wind chill. Temperature and/or sustained wind chills at or below -15F during peak pick-up times for buses and walking times for students are given special consideration.
- Weather predictions from satellite systems, local radar, National Weather and NOAA Weather radio.
- The weather's impact on our bus fleet.
- Building conditions (such as whether they have electricity and heat).
- Parking lots and sidewalk conditions.

### WHO MAKES THE DECISION?

As Superintendent of Schools, I am ultimately responsible for the final decision based on the above factors and recommendations from the Directors of Transportation and Maintenance.

### WHEN IS THE DECISION MADE?

We strive to make the decision to close or delay by 5:30 a.m. In some cases, we can make a decision to close or delay the night before but those are special exceptions as conditions can change or improve significantly over night. Keep in mind that unusual weather conditions may force us to make closing/delay decisions after this time.

### WILL WE DELAY THE START OF SCHOOL?

We will utilize 2-Hour delayed starts. The addition of two hours for local township, county, and state workers to improve road conditions can make for drastic improvements. We realize that this can be a burden to some families but if a delayed start of two hours allows for students to attend school, we will utilize this option.

### WILL WE CLOSE SCHOOL IF CONDITIONS WORSEN?

Even if weather conditions worsen, we cannot reverse our decision in the morning without endangering students. Once we make the decision to open the schools, many parents rely on it and leave for work. If we then send students back home, many will return to unsupervised bus stops and empty houses. If conditions get worse during the school day, we may need to have an early dismissal, but we will give as much notice as possible through 'Knox Alerts' and the local media and communication outlets mentioned below.

Although our staff and I do our absolute best in this process, we know that often no perfect decision exists. If you do not feel that it is safe for your child to get to school, use your best judgment whether or not he or she should attend. Also, please discourage teenagers from driving in bad conditions and offer them alternatives as weather conditions worsen.

### HOW IS THE PUBLIC NOTIFIED?

The Mount Vernon City Schools will utilize 'Knox Alerts' which is an automated phone text alert system. We encourage all families to take advantage of this system as it is the fastest way to communicate school closings, delays, and general information. Sign-up for 'Knox Alerts' can be accessed via the communications tab on the district website. When signing up please check the box labeled closings and delays.

Tune to - TV channels NBC (4), ABC (6), FOX (28), WBNS (10). Tune to - Radio stations WQIO (93.7), WMVO (1300), WNZR (90.9 FM) - for up-to-date information on school closings.

Please do not call the school or bus garage unless it is an emergency.

We hope that this explanation helps everyone understand the process we use in making the safest possible decision for all students and staff in our district.

William Seder Jr., Superintendent

## STEM at MVMS ▶▶ Continued from page 1

The goals of Music+STEM are:

- Engage students in social music making and equip them with skills so they may continue throughout their lives
- Reveal to and engage students in the ways in which music is part of our lives and society
- Engage students in the practice of the scientific process, critical thinking skills, and 21st century skills
- Instill in students the importance of reflection in the learning process – “Fail To Learn”

These goals will be met in a variety of ways. Students will spend time exploring the ways in which music is a part of our lives and society, making music on instruments like drums and ukuleles, and learning as much as they can about a topic of their choice. A typical week will have students doing all these things - but Music+STEM is all about innovation - so expect the unexpected!

### STEM + MUSIC + STEM = COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

The Music + STEM class recently teamed up with the STEM class to create an instrument, compose, and perform. This combo meant a lot of kids, noise, materials, and most importantly – learning!

After an introductory challenge and a day spent studying the science of sound, students spent three days building their instruments out of supplies provided or things they brought from home. Trial and error was a big part of this process as students discovered they could learn how to make their instruments better from their mistakes. Finally, students wrote music in the Rondo form and performed their compositions for the class.

Overall, the results of this unit were outstanding. Students applied the science of sound to the instruments they built and more importantly, turned failures into learning. Most students did not end up with the exact instrument they first conceived – but many of the results were even better. Composing and performing was new for most kids, but many had very successful first attempts! We’re looking forward to see what else they can accomplish throughout the semester!



### ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Students who are not in the STEM or Music+STEM classes have the opportunities to participate in after-school activities that are open to all MVMS students. The MV Jacket Drummers meet on Tuesdays to learn the skills of drumming along with developing their ability to communicate and work cooperatively. Students will also soon have the chance to join a Ukulele Club where they can learn to play and relax as we jam to their favorite songs.

Last year, over 50 MVMS students participated in STEMfest Knox sponsored by SPI Spot, The Works, Ariel, Kenyon, COTC, MVNU with exhibits by Siemens and the Gambier robotics team. Beginning in November, any interested students may work in teams after school to solve one of three challenges: water filtration, home insulation, or bridge building. The competition for STEMfest Knox 2016 will be held in February. Mount Vernon Middle School is one of a few schools in the state providing these classes to its students. We are excited to watch these programs grow!

## The Game that Changed Recess: GaGa Ball

*By PSES 5th Graders: Trenton Long, Lydia McKenzie, Aubrey Meeker, Dylan Perkins, Sarah Phillips and Abigail Taylor*

Pleasant Street Elementary is playing a new game. In a world where our young people are viewed by some as not getting enough exercise our students are now heavily involved in a physically challenging playground game called GaGa Ball. GaGa Ball originated from the Jewish community and in our country would be best described as “dodge ball below the waist”. GaGa Ball goes by several other names: Israeli Dodgeball, Octoball, and Panda Ball and is played inside an octagon-shaped “pit” with wooden sides. The object of the game is to try to eliminate opponents while being the last one left in the pit. Each player hits the ball with their hands, trying to hit their opponents below the waist. Be ready, quick and careful because if the ball hits you, you are out and must leave the pit. GaGa matches can be played between two people or with a large group. Students at Pleasant Street are more focused on getting their work completed so that they can rush out at recess and get to the two GaGa pits. By far, GaGa Ball is the most popular game on the playground. Our students love playing and benefit from the physical activity that comes from the game.





## Mount Vernon City Schools

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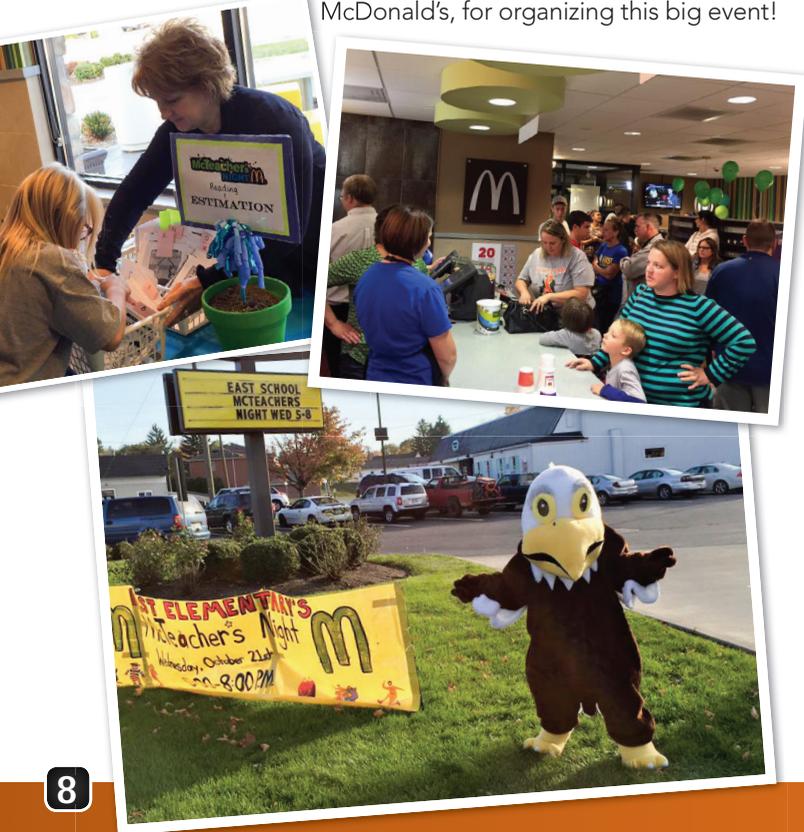
## RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER

### McTeacher's Night

East School staff hosted a McTeacher's Night on October 21st at McDonald's on Newark Road. Students, parents, and members of the community who visited McDonald's had the chance to see the teachers and principal serve up cheeseburgers and fries. Staff members volunteered for shifts between 5-8 p.m. McTeacher's Night is a program in which educators and volunteers "work" for an evening at a local McDonald's to raise money for a school related cause. Twenty percent of the sales during the McTeacher's Night was donated to the East School PTO! The PTO will be putting the money towards supporting the technology needs of East students.

Along with serving dinner, staff provided learning activities in math and reading. The East School Eagle also made a guest appearance for photo opportunities with families and students. What a fun night of fundraising for East Elementary School! In November, this partnership will continue as Ronald McDonald visits East School to provide an anti-bullying show that focuses on friendship and cooperation.

Thanks to McDonald's and all the customers who supported our McTeacher's Night! It was a great success! Our PTO earned approximately \$600.00 from their portion of the revenue collected from the sales during this time. A special thank you to Mrs. Susan White, 5th Grade Teacher at East, Mrs. Kelly Welker and McDonald's, for organizing this big event!



### Fall Senior Citizens Luncheon

The Mount Vernon City Schools Board of Education invites all area Senior Citizens to our annual fall luncheon scheduled for Thursday, November 19, 2015, from noon until 2:00 p.m. The luncheon will take place at the Mount Vernon High School.

Superintendent, Bill Seder, will be the host for the luncheon and looks forward to sharing with our Senior Citizens various happenings in the Mount Vernon City School District. You won't want to miss the wonderful entertainment provided by students in the District, as well as an afternoon of fellowship and a fabulous luncheon provided by our very own Food Service Department (sponsored in part by the Community Foundation of Mount Vernon and Knox County).

If you would like to attend the luncheon, please R.S.V.P. to Terry Streby at 740-397-7422, extension 6025, or email her with your name and telephone number at [tstreby@myvcsd.us](mailto:tstreby@myvcsd.us). The deadline to register is Friday, November 13, 2015.

We looking forward to seeing you at the Fall Senior Citizens luncheon!

