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# Mount Vernon City Schools DISTRICT NEWS

Fall 2019

*Connecting Our Community*



## Excellence Under Construction

*A message from Superintendent  
William Seder Jr.*

The word Excellence is defined by the quality of being outstanding or extremely good. The term 'Under Construction' conjures up many thoughts: orange barrels, flashing lights, fluorescent vest and hard hats. Generally speaking, it refers to a building, structure, or project that is unfinished but actively being worked upon. 'Excellence Under Construction' is our theme for the coming year both literally and figuratively.

Literally speaking, we have had an incredibly busy summer with various construction projects throughout the district. The Education Gateway Project has taken center stage adjacent to the Middle School / High School campus. The stadium entrance is complete and the steel beams and roofing of the Field House and Transportation Building are beginning to take shape and extend to the skies.

Construction and maintenance projects have been plentiful throughout the district last summer positively impacting all of our buildings including the learning center. Through the community's continued support we have been able to target and prioritize much needed improvements to district facilities including safety initiatives, the High School Auditorium, classrooms, sidewalks, drop ceilings, and roofing repairs to name a few.



Figuratively speaking, our students and staff are constantly under construction, unfinished but actively a work in progress with excellence as our goal. We are committed to being a 'Future Focused' school district with a 'Student Centered' emphasis on success and wellness, while embracing a 'Growth Mindset' for all students and staff.

## Emergency Renewal Levy

*Renew our Investment to Protect our Future*

Mount Vernon City School District has taken great strides to improve the district's fiscal stability, while increasing educational options and advancing our preparedness in the areas of Safety, Technology, and improved Facilities.

### What is the tax levy issue on the November ballot?

- November 5th - Emergency levy **RENEWAL** for Mount Vernon City Schools that will combine two existing levies into one.
- This is **NOT** a new tax levy but a renewal of several levies dating back to 1984.

### What is the cost to Homeowners?

- **ZERO ADDITIONAL TAXES.** Approval of this issue keeps Mount Vernon City Schools funding at current levels.
- The cost to homeowners **will not increase** during the term of this Emergency Operating levy even if property values increase.

### Why is the passage of this levy renewal important?

- Conducting levy campaigns is quite expensive and time consuming for the district. Voters often comment that they experience ballot fatigue - voting nearly every year on school ballot issues.
- Mount Vernon City Schools needs this continued funding to maintain the district's fiscal stability and educational drive for excellence. This combined levy makes up 16% of the district's total revenues.

### When and how can I vote for this RENEWAL levy?

- The Renewal levy is Tuesday, November 5, 2019.
- Please vote at your local polling location
  - o (Polls Open 6:30 a.m. – 7:30 p.m.)
- Absentee Ballot and Early In-Person Voting information can be found at <https://www.co.knox.oh.us>

## Mount Vernon City Schools

VOTE



**ZERO  
TAX INCREASE**

**RENEWAL  
LEVY**

**NOVEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup>**

With your support, Mount Vernon City Schools will combine two existing renewal levies that are expiring this year and next. These two levies have been renewed a combined 10 times since 1984 and are an essential part of our operating funds. Renewal of these two levies will result in **ZERO TAX INCREASE** and is vital to our continued drive to excellence.





FALL 2019

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**OCTOBER 24** 12:00 - 2:00 pm  
Senior Citizens Luncheon MVHS

**NOVEMBER 8 & 9** 7:30 pm  
Fall Production MVHS Theater

**NOVEMBER 14** 7:00 pm  
6th Grade Band & Orchestra Concert MVMS Gymnasium

**DECEMBER 7** TBA  
Christmas Festival String Ensembles  
Downtown Mount Vernon

**DECEMBER 8** TBA  
Christmas Parade  
Downtown Mount Vernon

**DECEMBER 10** 7:00 pm  
Columbia Elementary Winter Program Memorial Theater

**DECEMBER 11** 7:00 pm  
Dan Emmett Elementary Winter Program MVNU Chapel

**DECEMBER 12** 6:30 pm  
Middle School Orchestra & Band Concert MVHS Theater

**DECEMBER 16** 7:00 pm  
Sounds of the Season Choir Concert MVNU Chapel

**DECEMBER 17** 6:30 pm  
High School Orchestra & Band Concert MVHS Theater

**DECEMBER 17** 7:00 pm  
East Elementary Winter Program MVNU Chapel

**DECEMBER 18** 7:00 pm  
Pleasant Street Elementary Winter Program MVNU Chapel

**DECEMBER 19** 7:00 pm  
Twin Oak Elementary Winter Program MVNU Chapel

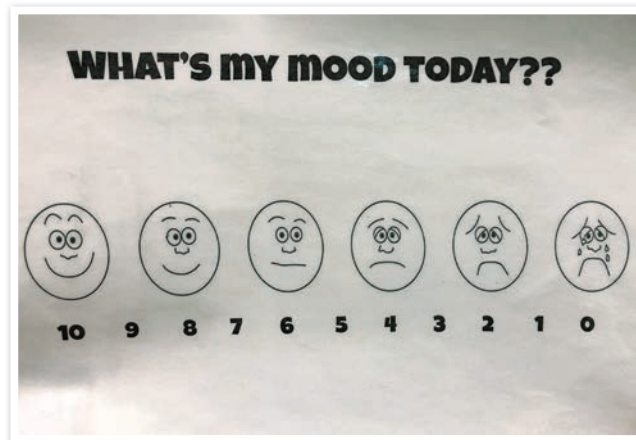
**DECEMBER 19** 7:00 pm  
Wiggin Street Elementary Winter Program  
Rosse Hall, Gambier

## Social Groups Help Meet the Needs of DE Students

*Margy Arck, Dan Emmett Elementary Principal*

*Within each such social group, a feeling of solidarity prevails, a compelling need to work together and a joy in doing so....- Christian Lous Lange*

At Dan Emmett Elementary our students' academic, physical, and emotional growth is a priority. Working together, the staff developed social skills groups that meet at least once a week for 20-30 minutes each session. Lessons teach students to make eye contact, sharing, working with others, having personal space and sharing body language; teaching social skills is extremely important for all students to be successful in and out of school. Groups can improve students' positive behavior and reduce negative behaviors while effectively preventing a variety of problems such as violence, truancy, or unkind actions. Social skills learning promotes student academic success and overall well-being.



At Dan Emmett Elementary, we do even more with our students. Mr. Gotschall, our School Counselor, works with Intervention Specialists to help students learn skills in a variety of areas. Social skills groups provide an opportunity for students to learn problem-solving skills, develop how to interact with their peers in an appropriate manner, and express themselves in attempts to expose or release emotions. Social group sessions begin with the student using a visual chart to identify their feelings on a scale from 0-10. Students are encouraged to process what's going on in their head and in their life. This helps the student share something that may be worrying them. By sharing with their peers and adults, the students can see and hear other options to help deal with what is going on in their day. The School Counselor and Intervention Specialists connect solutions to what students learn in Second Step, PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports) Matrix, and R.O.A.R.S. (Respectful, Outstanding, Accepting, Responsible and Safe). Positive behaviors are reinforced, and buddy systems are developed within the group to try and alleviate a student from feeling alone. Group topics are relevant to what is happening in students' lives and include feeling identification, positive communication, conflict resolution, and other essential life skills to help them succeed.

In addition to social groups, School Counselors help meet the wide variety of student needs through individual counseling, linking with community resources, working with community agencies, responding to crisis, consulting with faculty and support staff about student's behavior and mental health concerns, and support to administration. School Counselors provide resources to students and staff, monitor students' academic progress, help students plan for the future, and advocate for the needs of all students.





## The Nine Dollar Adventure

*MacKenzie Scott, Third Grade Teacher, Columbia Elementary*

*"We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say, 'It's not my child, not my community, not my problem.' Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes." - Fred (Mister) Rogers*



Nine dollars does not seem like an amount of money that can make a big difference, but just nine dollars is making a huge impact on every student at Columbia Elementary School this year.

Through a Facebook post, a couple of Columbia teachers put out a challenge to their followers to provide one dollar each school month to provide a book for a student. Throughout the summer, donors decided to take the pledge to give nine dollars to students at Columbia. The original goal was to raise enough money to support the students in one grade level. Within fifteen minutes from the original post, the goal was surpassed, and these teachers focused on a more ambitious goal: to get brand new books in the hands of all students at Columbia. Donations came from all over. Many donors within our community chose to take a pledge to help get kids reading. People from Arizona to South Carolina chose to take the challenge and support the students at Columbia.

Jessica Rowekamp, a donor, says, "I work at Ohio State and I am the advisor for the student organization Mentors for Kids. We bring over 250 elementary students to campus each week to expose them to higher education. During each activity, we read a

book to the students, because we know how important reading is to a child's educational development. I am so happy to be able to provide the same opportunity for these students"

Nate Woodford, a MVCSD alumni said, "I chose to donate because THOSE kids are our future. Financially, let's take some of the burden off of the parents. It takes a whole community to help raise them!"

This nine dollars will get each student a brand new book of their own to keep. Students receive a new book every month they are in school. The first round of books came to students in September and it felt like Christmas morning. Excitement and joy filled the halls as students heard about the hundreds of people who chose to give them these books. Emma

Thompson, a third grader, couldn't put her book down after she started reading. "I read for 31 minutes because I loved my new Humphrey book!"

The students and the teachers are looking forward to the next round of books in October. Fourth grader, Kyleigh Woods, enjoys getting new things to read. "I am thankful for the

people who gave us the books." We feel so fortunate to have this opportunity for our kids. The Columbia community is extremely thankful for every donor and the change they are making in each Columbia Tiger's life!







## The Eagles' Nest Kicks Off Third Year

Karly Watterson, *East Elementary School Principal*

"There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about." - Margaret J. Wheatley

"Good things are coming our way!" said Eagles' Nest program coordinator, Marilyn Nagy, "I couldn't be more thankful!" This was a message to me in July when most people are on vacation or relaxing during their summer break - not Marilyn! She was talking to people about volunteering, observing programs to determine if they would be a good fit with Eagles' Nest, and receiving grants to have healthy snacks for students for free.



The Eagles' Nest is an after-school program funded by United Way of Knox County, that focuses on academics and enrichment, and is starting its third year at East Elementary. The group of students is divided in half with the first half spending 45 minutes working with volunteers on homework and having a healthy snack while the second half spends 45 minutes on an enrichment activity. After 45 minutes, the groups switch. Students are able to walk away with their homework either completed or better understood and the experience of an enrichment activity that they may or may not have experienced before. Some enrichment activities include STEM activities, Yoga, Thrive - which is a program that addresses physical activities and self-esteem, the Brown Family Environmental Center will be presenting lessons and activities, Destination Imagination, SPI Spot activities, and Board Game Night- to name a few. "I am super excited for all of the opportunities the kids will have this year," Marilyn shared.

The Eagles' Nest guest list is made up of second, third, fourth, and fifth grade students that were selected based on their beginning of the year assessment scores. Participating students are able to improve their assessment scores by the end of the year exceeding personal expectations.

Of course, Marilyn surrounds herself with a passionate and dedicated team to keep The Eagles' Nest running smoothly. First grade teacher, Jenny Merrilees and third grade teacher, Casey Melton, take turns leading the academic time, while Title Aide, Destiny Smith is there every night supervising the enrichment portion. Volunteers arrive at their scheduled time from Mount Vernon Nazarene University, United Way, Riverside Recovery, and MVHS Key Club, as well as individuals that have contacted Marilyn with the desire to help. We are excited to partner with Mount Vernon Nazarene University. Students from the Language

and Literacy Class at The Naz are required to volunteer 6 hours of tutoring as a part of their course requirements. The Eagles' Nest has been an amazing program and would not be as successful as it is without this reliable team of people to support our students!



October 1st was the official opening day for the after-school program, funded by the generosity of Knox County United Way.



## Community Bulletin Board Now Available

MVCSD now offers a way of accessing and posting digital flyers for online distribution. Flyers are organized by building level. To access the Community Bulletin Board, select the Community Icon from the MVCSD website.



Flyers that the district receives for distribution from district boosters, PTOs, and nonprofit organizations are posted on this webpage as a service to our community. Flyers are independent of the authority of the Mount Vernon City School District.

Organizations that wish to have flyers posted on the Community Bulletin Board can upload flyers directly to the district. To submit a flyer for consideration, select Submit a Flyer, fill out the Flyer Submission Form and attach the flyer.

All flyers must be approved by District Administration.

Additional questions or assistance contact John Frye, district Web Manager, at 740.397.7422 x 6038; email [jfrye@mvcasd.us](mailto:jfrye@mvcasd.us)

### Community Bulletin Board

#### MV Community Flyers

Flyers that the district receives for distribution from district boosters, PTOs, and nonprofit organizations are posted here as a service to our community. Flyers are independent of the authority of the Mount Vernon City School District. "The opinions, products, activities, and/or services of these organizations are neither sponsored nor endorsed by the Mount Vernon City School District."

#### Building Levels

- All Elementary Schools
- Middle School
- High School
- Digital Academy

[Submit a Flyer](#)





## Learning Can Take You Anywhere “Oh, the places we’ll go!”

*Sue Miller, Twin Oak Elementary School Principal*

*“A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions.” - Oliver Wendell Holmes*



In August, our thoughts turned to the new school year and finding a theme that fit Twin Oak. Dr. Seuss’s story “Oh, the Places You’ll Go!,” seemed like a great starting place for the Twin Oak staff. As we pondered the story’s message, the importance of seizing new opportunities, keeping an open mind, and trying new things, it seemed like a good direction to take. Students growing in their experiences and being

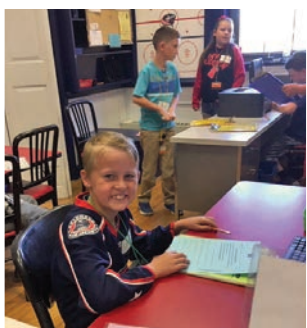
able to optimize learning was at the heart of the discussion. Offering students opportunities to try new things and be excited about learning was the goal. The year-long theme of “Learning Can Take You Anywhere, Oh the places we’ll go!” was a perfect place to begin our learning adventures.

We started out by looking at our field trips. The students attend Youth Enrichment Series Concerts (YES) and the



MTV Arts productions. Students enjoy the experience of attending a dramatic, dance, or musical performance in a theater setting. We wanted to continue the excitement that these opportunities present our students in our school and outside in the community.

To open the school year, the fifty-year anniversary of travel to the moon seemed a good place to start so Twin Oak staff booked the Space Dome Planetarium. Next, traveling to Columbus for fifth graders to experience Junior Achievement Biztown was on the agenda. Soon our fourth graders are set to travel to Roscoe Village, the Ohio Supreme Court, and the State House. Many classes make their way to Gambier to visit the Brown Environmental Center and experience nature firsthand. Our third graders explore Mount Vernon’s history and meet important people in our community. We are hoping to find even more places to explore in the months to come.



All of these experiences will take learning in so many different directions. Whether in the classroom or out and about in the community, we know that learning can take us anywhere and we can’t wait to see the places we will go this school year.

## Wiggin Street Arts Night

*Sarah Reyes, Christina Biggerstaff, Brock Evans; Wiggin Street Specials Teachers*

*“Play is the highest form of research.” - Albert Einstein*

A Night at the Movies was the theme for Wiggin Street’s second annual Arts Night held on Tuesday, September 24th. Students and families rotated among each discipline area spending 25 minutes at each session. Each session had movie-themed games and activities for students and their families.



Art specialist Christina Biggerstaff hosted a rock painting session. Families enjoyed rock painting together while listening to music from popular movies. Each person was instructed to choose a word from the word wall that best described them to serve

as the focus of his or her rock. The words described key traits of heroes in movies and characteristics of being a champion. Options included determined, kind, and brave. These rocks are going to be a part of the Wiggin Street Elementary landscape as a visually welcoming statement for all to see as they enter the building.

The music session, led by music specialist Sarah Reyes, was an escape room challenge. According to the scenario set up, two of the Avengers had been kidnapped and the villain used a shrink ray to miniaturize them and lock them in a box. The students and their families had 25 minutes to solve five different music puzzles. Each puzzle yielded a letter and when the letters were unscrambled, they formed the code to open the combination to the box and free the superheroes. Puzzles were focused around musical literacy tasks. All families were successful in their quest!



Specialist Brock Evans facilitated the PE session. Families transitioned with a Pokemon moving target activity. Other activities included an Avengers training fitness video and

superhero warm up task cards. Once each family completed these tasks, there were seven different exercise-themed playing cards. The cards were grouped using superheroes as the suits (Thor, Hulk, Black Widow, etc), and each hero corresponded with a different exercise or skill, including creating your own exercise.

Wiggin Street families commented on how much they enjoyed the evening, particularly because it was focused on the arts and celebrating students’ knowledge and accomplishment in these areas. We look forward to continuing this tradition in future years.



## It Takes A Village

**Teresa Weaver,** *Pleasant Street Elementary Principal*

*"Trauma is perhaps the most avoided, ignored, belittled, denied, misunderstood, and untreated cause of human suffering." - Peter Levine*

We are very thankful for the many Knox County businesses and organizations that bless our school family in so many ways. Ariel Foundation for example, has made a financial commitment to help Knox County students through the Neurosequential Model for Education (NME) funding. This funding allows certified trainers from the Village Network to come into Pleasant Street Elementary School, train a group of staff members, and help us implement strategies and resources to better serve our student body.



Many students come through our school's doors every day having experienced some sort of trauma or stress. Through NME training we are better informed on how trauma or stress impacts the brain and how this in turn affects a student's ability to function and learn in the school environment. Through our increased understanding of brain development and developmental trauma we now are better prepared to help our students focus attention, remember instruction and complete tasks as well as self-regulation.



Faculty and staff have participated in a lot of seatwork, read many different books, watched videos, and visited an NME certified school. From these experiences we have been able to identify what we think is needed for our students. The impact this training is having is exemplified by one of our students, Andrew, who states that "I love the kinetic rings because when I am angry the rings feel good and help me calm down really fast."

Some examples of current things happening throughout our building:

- Classrooms with calm environments
- Mindfulness activities
- Self-regulation stations
- Sensory path
- Calm Corners
- Movement breaks
- Sensory tools
- Hull Brain Boost Neurodeck Cards/ Activities

Our goal at Pleasant Street Elementary is to become a trauma informed school where students are taught the social and emotional skills to be able to work through their frustrations and their trauma. This will ultimately better prepare their brains and bodies for learning and growth. We are doing our best to focus on the whole child and all of the needs that entails.



## Senior Citizens - Save The Date - Your Fall Lunch is Served!

We are excited to announce that Thursday, October 24th at 12:00 noon, is the date and time for our annual Fall Senior Citizens Luncheon and Program! The event will be held in the gymnasium at Mount Vernon High School.

There is no charge for this event thanks to the sponsorship of the Knox County Foundation, and the Mount Vernon City Schools Board of Education.

Master of Ceremonies, Superintendent Bill Seder is busy planning an entertaining and informative afternoon for area senior citizens.

If you have attended our luncheons before, you know what a great time we all have when we get together. Please join us for some good food, fellowship with each other, and an awesome time sharing with students.

So, don't hesitate!! R.S.V.P. by calling Terry Streby at **740 397-7422, ext 6025**, or email her at **tstreby@mvcasd.us** by Tuesday, October 22nd.

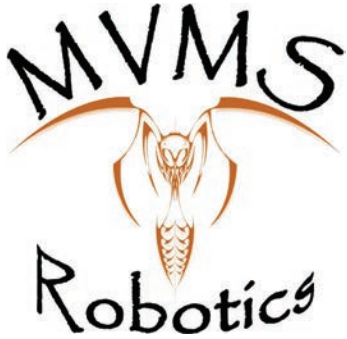




## VEX Robotics Team

Emily Miller, Middle School Math Teacher/ Robotics Coach

*"The role of the teacher is to create the conditions for invention rather than provide ready-made knowledge." - Seymour Papert*



Mount Vernon Middle School will be fielding a new team this year, one that will look vastly different from traditional teams that are currently competing for the Jackets. This will be the first year of competition for the MVMS Robotics Team in VEX Robotics Competition. This competition is presented by the Robotics Education

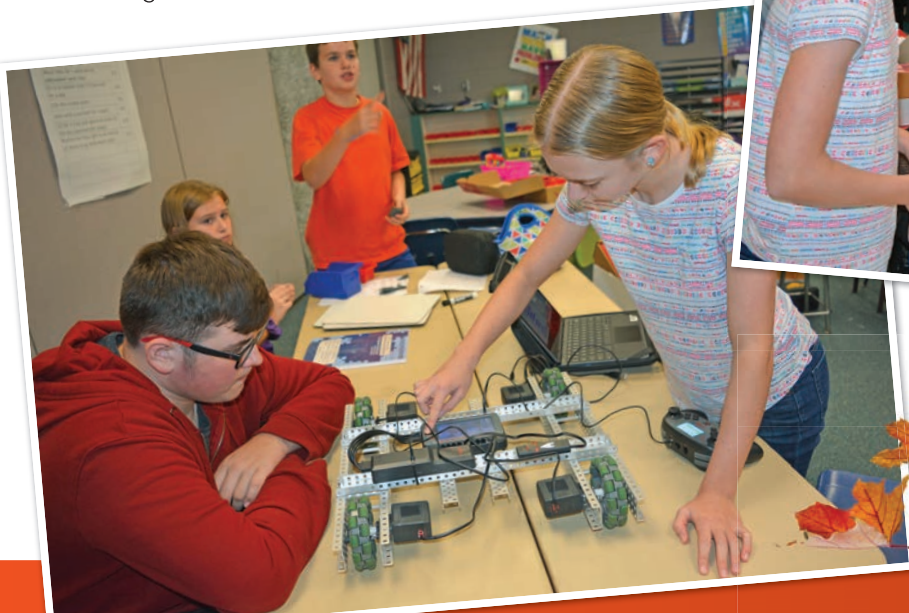
& Competition Foundation, the largest and fastest growing middle school and high school robotics program globally, with more than 20,000 teams from 50 countries playing in over 1,700 competitions worldwide. The team was able to be formed after receiving a grant through the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation and the GirlPowered Initiative. There are currently 20 students participating in one of the four teams at MVMS.

Each year, an exciting engineering challenge is presented in the form of a game, this year it is the Tower Takeover. MVMS students, with guidance from their coach Emily Miller, are building and coding innovative robots, partnering in alliances with teams, and competing against other robotics teams from all over the State. VEX Robotics Competition takes communication and collaboration to another level as students scout and negotiate with other teams to build alliances that can withstand the competition. Students build Engineering Portfolios and present ideas to engineers and industry experts at each tournament. 7th Grader Tessa Corrigan commented, "I never knew anything about robotics before getting involved; now I'm working with my team to create an engineering portfolio that shows our progress. I look forward to scouting to find other teams to partner with as we compete."

With VEX Robotics Competition, teams of students are tasked with designing and building a robot to perform against other teams in a game-based

engineering challenge. 7th Grader Tyler Ing explained, "I like robotics because we have to build a working robot and problem solve along the way. Plus, I get to use my technology and coding skills while having fun." Classroom STEM concepts are put to the test as students learn lifelong skills in teamwork, leadership, communication and collaboration. According to 8th Grader Kyler Howard, "I think robotics is amazing! It's not only teaching me how to build and program, I'm also learning hard work and other real-life lessons." VEX Robotics Competition prepares students to become future innovators. 95% of VEX Robotics participants reported an increased interest in STEM subject areas and in pursuing STEM-related careers. This enthusiasm towards STEM careers is already piquing interest in the 7th and 8th graders on the MVMS Robotics team. Hannah Hofferberth pointed out, "Being able to have computer science related experiences in 8th grade on the robotics team will help prepare me for what I hope to pursue after high school."

Tournaments are held year-round at the regional, state, and national levels and culminate at the VEX Robotics World Championship each April. The Mount Vernon VEX Qualifier for Tower Takeover will be Saturday, November 9th, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm, at Mount Vernon Middle School Gymnasium. The event is free and open to the public. There is expected to be over 40 teams from all over Ohio. Follow the team's progress and tournament news on Instagram, Facebook or Twitter @MVMSRobotics or MVMS Robotics website <http://www.mvcsd.us/RoboticsTeam.aspx>





## RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER

### Getting Your Hands Dirty

*Scott Will, Mount Vernon High School Principal*

*"The best way to learn is by doing. The only way to build a strong work ethic is getting your hands dirty." - Alex Spanos*

More often than not you cannot get involved in a hands-on project without getting your hands dirty. It is part of the experience and at completion, the sign of a job well done. In keeping with our district theme of "Excellence Under Construction", some of the strongest experiences we can offer our students are the activities where they can get involved with their hands, getting them a little dirty.

There is no greater example of "getting the hands dirty" than with our students involved in our Vocational Agricultural programming and FFA Chapter under the leadership of Ms. Stephanie Plumly. Between the Soils and Forestry contests, our students are getting their hands dirty and not only competing at the highest levels in our area, but also gaining confidence and leadership skills that will carry them through many chapters of their lives to come.

Students that compete on our Rural and Urban Soils teams are literally getting into pits and evaluating sites for agricultural and developmental purposes respectively. Soils teams compete by determining slope, erosion, soil texture, depth and drainage in agricultural settings while Urban teams will evaluate slope, landform, flooding hazard, soil stability, soil texture, soil depth to seasonal high-water table and soil depth to bedrock. When we look at the usefulness and need for these skills, it cannot be

more evident than the current evaluations completed by the construction firms and environmental consultants responsible for the building sites around our very own campus.

Students in Forestry are participating in timber cruise (sample measurement of a stand used to estimate the amount of standing timber that the forest contains), identifying chainsaw parts, identifying leaves, tree pests and diseases along with some general knowledge questions. Once again students are getting their hands dirty and learning about a very important resource to our environment as well as to the lumber industry.

These experiences challenge the students outside of the classroom as well as allowing them to apply knowledge and expertise that they learned in the classroom. The skills acquired in participation in these events are second to none in terms of developing a true appreciation for not only the environment, but those who are caretakers of the environment and activities that impact that environment. Many of our students will continue their pursuits of future classes and careers based on the skills learned in our Vocational Agriculture program.

When we look at educational options that have a lasting impact, we are fortunate for the community support of our students "getting their hands dirty" with this type of programming.



**Forestry Team:** Anna Patterson, Lydia Neighbarger, Raylene Fletcher, Mattie Butler  
(not pictured: Erin Combs and Myah Moody)



**Urban Soils Team:** Front row - Erin Combs, Cade Ellis, Will Laymon, Lydia Neighbarger; Back row - Gavin Burke, Anna Patterson, Alyse Ladig, Hannah Henry, Emma Talbott, Lakelyn Parnell, James Frazee