

# PHOENIX

## CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Winter 2024



### Phoenix schools receive donation for food programs

The Odd Fellow and Rebekah Foundation recently donated \$25,000 to Erin's Angels, which will be used to help alleviate food insecurity issues for students in Central New York.

The Odd Fellow and Rebekah Foundation has a longstanding tradition of supporting initiatives that positively impact communities. This latest donation to Erin's Angels reinforces their dedication to addressing critical social issues and creating positive change. The \$25,000 is designated for food purchases for the Phoenix and West Genesee weekend backpack programs as well as support for outreach and the PCSD summer meals program.

"We are incredibly grateful to Erin's Angels and The Odd Fellow and Rebekah Foundation for their generosity and desire to help our students facing food insecurity," said PCSD Superintendent Christopher Byrne. "This donation will have a far-reaching impact and alleviate some of the burden families experience when it comes to feeding their children."

According to Sheila Dion, founder and director of Erin's Angels, her life's mission is to help feed hungry children.



*PCSD staff and administration gather for a photo with Erin's Angels founder Sheila Dion and volunteers. The district recently received a substantial donation, provided by The Odd Fellow and Rebekah Foundation, for its backpack and summer meals programs.*

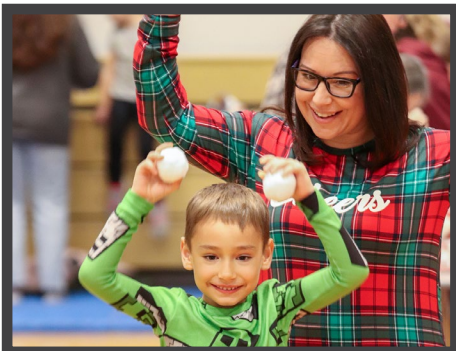
"It absolutely broke my heart to know there were children who were hungry," Dion said. "Thus, with unwavering determination, I set out to address the issue of food insecurity in our community head-on."

That determination has helped hundreds of Phoenix students in recent years. The backpack program currently serves between 80 and 120 students, and provides nonperishable food for students during weekends and school breaks.

"We encourage people to get involved by volunteering and/or coming to our annual fundraisers," Dion said. The link to sign up to volunteer is at [erinsangels.com](http://erinsangels.com), and people

can follow our Facebook page for upcoming fundraisers. We also encourage people to consider a legacy gift through our partnership with the Upstate Foundation."

Donations such as individually packaged foods can be dropped off at Michael A. Maroun Elementary during school hours. Monetary donations may be submitted at [erinsangels.com](http://erinsangels.com), or checks can be mailed to PO Box 443, Phoenix, NY 13135.



### Maroun Elementary's holiday night draws hundreds of families

Michael A. Maroun Elementary School families had an evening filled with food, fun and festivities as they prepared for the holiday season in mid-December.

The holiday family night, sponsored by the MAM Parent-Faculty Organization, provided families with

an opportunity to make crafts, play, eat food and spend quality time together.

Tables were set up where students decorated cookies, made ornaments, posed for holiday photos and enjoyed the evening alongside family members.



## Phoenix students travel to Greece through distance learning



Although the majority of Jim Cassella's fifth grade students at Emerson J. Dillon Middle School haven't flown internationally, they have been able to travel the world through new and innovative ways.

Through distance learning connections facilitated by CiTi BOCES, Cassella's students have gotten a glimpse into classrooms as far away as Greece, Norway and Hungary. Over the past several years, students have made more than three dozen stops as part of a virtual learning initiative that links Phoenix students with their peers around the world.

Recently, Cassella's class participated in a "Geography 20 Questions" videoconference where they asked the other class "yes" or "no" questions to determine their location. The Phoenix class asked the other students if their country bordered an ocean, if it was north or south of the equator, and additional questions to pinpoint the location of their peers. After narrowing down the location, the Phoenix students determined that the other class was from Greece.

"Our students really enjoy making these connections and learning about different countries," Cassella said. "It goes beyond a geography lesson. Things such as customs, current events, and basic lessons in humanity often present themselves through distance learning. It's a great opportunity for all involved."

## JCB Students Take Trip to Local Bowling Alley



Students at John C. Birdleough High School recently took a field trip to the B'ville Sports Bowl for a physical education class.

The field trip provided students with an opportunity to explore their community resources and gain exposure to the sport. The top 10 female and male bowlers were recognized. They included: Brandon Aldrich (238), Landon Thatcher (218), Justin Barrington (206), Parker Hall (156), Lily Amidon (136), Chase Slocum (135), Lucas Wooding (133), Kaylen Lamphere (132), Emma Fox (131), Dakota Smith (129), Maura Catanzaro (127), Kai Clary (125), Eli Bailer (125), Daniel Swank (123), Lyla Duskee (122), Margo Pritting (121), Emma Bova (118), Alexis Davis (117), Finley Harwood (116), and Lia McBurnie (114).

These bowlers, along with others, will be competing for Phoenix throughout the winter in hopes of repeating last year's success, in which they captured a championship.

"We would like to thank the Arts in Education program for their continued support with these off-campus opportunities, as well as the staff at The B'ville Sports Bowl," said PE teacher Angie Neiss. "It's always a win when you can introduce students to a sport that could potentially become a lifelong activity."

## MAM Students begin 1 School, 1 Book Initiative



Book characters recently came to life during an assembly at Michael A. Maroun Elementary School as a schoolwide reading initiative got underway.

The effort is part of a national campaign called One School, One Book, which aims to promote reading among the entire student population. A committee of administrators and teachers have planned several literacy activities during the upcoming weeks, and each student received a copy of the book, "Kenny and the Dragon" to read at home as a family. At school, students will delve into the novel with their classmates.

"We have several book-related activities and different character-specific things planned to make this a big event for the students," said MAM Assistant Principal

Stephanie Critelli-Locke. "We'll be doing a scavenger hunt, a coloring contest, and different activities in the regular classroom and in physical education, music and art classes as well."

For more information about One School, One Book, visit [readtothem.org](http://readtothem.org).





## The importance of showing up: Attendance matters!

- Absenteeism in the first month of school can predict poor attendance throughout the school year. Half the students who miss 2-4 days in September go on to miss nearly a month of school.
- Chronic absence appears to have doubled by the end of the 2021-22 school year. We estimate that it now affects nearly one out of three students (or 16 million vs. 8 million students in the 2018-19 school year).
- Absenteeism and its ill effects start early. Poor attendance can influence whether children read proficiently by the end of third grade or be held back. By 6th grade, chronic absence becomes a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school.
- Research shows that missing 10 percent of the school, or about 18 days in most school districts, negatively affects a student's academic performance. That's just two days a month and that's known as chronic absence.
- Students who live in communities with high levels of poverty are four times more likely to be chronically absent than others often for reasons beyond their control, such as unstable housing, unreliable transportation and a lack of access to health care.
- When students improve their attendance rates, they improve their academic prospects and chances for graduating.

\*Information courtesy of [www.attendanceworks.org](http://www.attendanceworks.org)

## EJD hosts annual Polar Express event



A longstanding gift-giving tradition at Emerson J. Dillon Middle School continued in December as the Polar Express was held.

An entire classroom was filled with hundreds of toys, games, clothing, jewelry, books and other items for

students to select for family members. Once students picked out gifts, EJD staff, volunteers and members of the boys' basketball team helped wrap and tag each gift in the library.

Event organizers noted that the Polar Express would not be possible without the donations and help of many people and businesses.

"Each year we are blown away by the generosity of our donors," said event organizers. "We truly live in an amazing community that supports one another. So many PCSD staff members, local businesses and community members come together for this wonderful event. It's amazing to see that kind of unity."

## Work ethic, dedication are Phoenix Marching Band's Recipe for Success

After capturing another New York State Field Band Conference title in the fall, the Phoenix Central School District's marching band is poised for future program success.

Thirteen seniors helped propel the band to the title in October, thanks to their "Reflective" performance. Although the band will miss the senior leadership next fall, PCSD marching band director John Bird is confident that other student musicians will step up to fill that role next season.

"We focus on building a strong program by getting our students to really buy into our philosophy," Bird said. "We teach the importance of work ethic, and the reason we are so successful is because of the hard work and dedication by everyone involved."

Bird also noted that the support of the community plays a role in the band's success year after year.

"We cannot be successful without the incredible support of our district, the parents, staff and the students," he said. "It's truly magical working in Phoenix."

Looking ahead, Bird envisions the program to continue its trajectory and constantly grow and improve.

## Sounds of the Season

Our student musicians had plenty of opportunities to showcase their talents in December. Students from each building were featured in a series of holiday concerts that delighted audiences comprised of family members and PCSD staff. Additional concerts will be held throughout March in celebration of Music in our Schools Month.





## Phoenix Central Schools

District Office  
116 Volney Street  
Phoenix, NY 13135  
(315) 695-1555

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### Mission Statement

The Phoenix Central School District is committed to a challenging educational program that promotes academic and personal growth for all students. Each student will become a confident, productive, responsible individual with a strong academic foundation, and the ability to make positive ethical choices. Our goal is to cultivate a sense of pride, character, and accountability in our students and community. The Board of Education, staff, parents, students, and community share responsibility for this mission.

The 2023-24 JCB Drama Club  
presents



Thurs. March 7 - 4:00 PM  
Fri. March 8 - 7:30 PM  
Sat. March 9 -  
2:00 PM & 7:30 PM

\$12 Adults  
\$8 SrCit & Children

# Disney BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

THE BROADWAY MUSICAL

© Disney

#### Reserved Seating:

John C Birdlebough High School Auditorium - 552 Main Street - Phoenix NY 13135  
Contact [Lspereno@phoenixcsd.org](mailto:Lspereno@phoenixcsd.org) or buy online at [showtix4u.com/events/JCBDramaClub](http://showtix4u.com/events/JCBDramaClub)

Music by Alan Menken

Lyrics by Tim Rice

Book by Linda Waloven

Originally Directed by Robert Jess Roth

Originally Produced by Disney Theatrical Productions

DISNEY'S BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI).  
All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI. [www.mtishows.com](http://www.mtishows.com)

### Constellation provides gifts for EJD families



Constellation Nuclear employees gather around the items they donated to two EJD families during Christmastime.

Two Emerson J. Dillon Middle School families recently received a holiday surprise thanks to the generosity of one local company.

For the past several years, Constellation Nuclear has provided gifts and other essential items to a few EJD families during the holiday season. That tradition continued this year when company employees stopped by EJD to drop off dozens of presents, toys, and household items for two families.

"Constellation is incredibly generous, and they always go way above and beyond," said EJD nurse Charlene Gill. "We are grateful to have such amazing community business partners. Our families truly appreciate the selflessness of Constellation Nuclear employees."

The Phoenix Central School District Board of Education, its officers and employees, shall not discriminate against any student, employee, or applicant on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, religion, marital status, sex, age, or disability. This policy of nondiscrimination includes: access by students to educational programs, counseling services for students, course offerings and student activities, recruitment and appointment of employees and employment pay, benefits, advancement and/or terminations.