A CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION

Milestones Mark End of the School Year
Dear Friends,

Another school year has now closed and it’s hard to believe how much our students have changed and advanced over the course of the year. It has been an exciting time of tremendous student progress, staff accomplishment and a year of student and family activities that have been fun and fulfilling. Congratulations to all of our boys and girls, and to the Class of 2016 — you truly inspire us with your determined resolve and courage — you did it!

There are dozens and dozens of highlights worthy of sharing and we are very proud. This edition of Insights provides you with a glimpse of some of these special moments. In every area of the organization we find growth and excellence. We find exceptional success in the implementation of our newly developed curriculum, with our instructors, therapists, medical professionals and support staff creatively collaborating to help our youngsters who confront tremendous obstacles.

Consistent with years past, we find success in the continued growth of our Outreach Program. When the School was first chartered in 1887, for the child who was blind or visually impaired, all roads led to our School.

Now, for children who are blind or visually impaired, the roads lead both to and from our School. Dedicated staff in our School serve our enrolled population who arrive every day in one of nearly 80 buses or vans, while other dedicated teachers travel the roads to various sites within local school districts to deliver vital services to young people who need them.

In the spirit of pursuing excellence, WPSBC continues to be on the move. As a school we are looking at what we can do to serve our students and families even more effectively. But we can’t achieve these results without the help of others. The success of our students is largely dependent on the support of family members, staff, donors and partners who dedicate their time and energy year-round to helping students with visual impairment.

Thank you for your interest and encouragement. It means the world to all of us at WPSBC.

Kind Regards,

Todd S. Reeves
Superintendent
**From Our Perspective**

**Snapshots of School Life**

Cody (pictured at right) and other students had a chance to touch, hear and explore different instruments during a visit from members of the University of Pittsburgh chapter of Kappa Kappa Psi, a national honorary band fraternity.

WPSBC student Gamble (pictured at right) high fives his new friend from our neighbors from the Falk Laboratory School who collaborated on a student-led project.

Allana hones her vocational skills while ringing up a customer on the new iPad driven cash register system donated to the school store by the generous WPSBC PTO.

Seniors Rock: Graduating student Abby gets a kick out of participating in a fun Senior Class activity.

Sebastian and a volunteer check out the new synthetic sports turf that was installed in the School’s meadow area to enhance accessibility for our students.
SENIOR COMMENCEMENT

Class of 2016

Graduation brings a sense of closure to each school year. For members of the senior class, it also marks the end of their education at the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children; it can be an emotional and momentous occasion.

In the week preceding graduation, students and staff members say their quiet goodbyes during the annual senior reception. On graduation day, family members and special friends gather for the ceremonial festivities. On June 2, 2016, the seven graduates of the Class of 2016 received awards and diplomas from our School as well as from their local school districts.

HENRY C. BUTERA
Son of Shirley Parker of Avalon, Pennsylvania – Allegheny County

Henry was best known at school for his easy-going, social and cooperative spirit. In fact, he was awarded the “Social Butterfly” award at graduation thanks to his engaging personality. While at school, Henry loved participating in multi-sensory activities including digging in the dirt during horticulture classes, swimming in the warm waters during aquatic therapy and listening to the wide variety of musical genres at the Creative Arts performances. A valued classroom participant, Henry honed his vocational skills as a greeter at “The Lion’s Den” using his switch-activated communication device. After graduation, Henry will attend an adult day program and live at home with his family.

ANNE FLYNN CASCIO
Daughter of Joann Flynn and Michael Cascio of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania – Allegheny County

Like many girls her age, Annie enjoys shopping, going to the movies and spending time with her family. She has excelled at learning appropriate social interaction, using sign language to make choices and using her hands for completing vocational tasks and leisure activities. At WPSBC, Annie contributed to the school community by participating in the recycling and shredding programs, working at the Lion’s Den and watering plants in the greenhouse. After graduation, Annie will attend Family Services/NORTHCO adult day program as well as volunteer at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, while living at home with her family.

ABIGAIL A. DIVELEY
Daughter of Richard and Ronda Dively of Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania – Blair County

Talented and ambitious, Abigail’s instructor cites her remarkable work ethic and keen sense of humor — no matter how big or small the challenges she has confronted. Well-known and popular on campus, Abby worked vocational jobs in the Expendable Supply Room and “The Lion’s Den” in various roles. She enjoyed playing music on the piano, participating in recreational sports and practicing typing on her braille writer. With her kind-hearted nature, her educational team describes her as the “Classroom Comedian,” always looking to put a smile on the face of others. After graduation, Abby will attend Ganister Station adult day program and live at home with her family.
MELANIE MARIE MCNULTY
Daughter of Timothy and Ann McNulty of Harmony, Pennsylvania – Butler County

With dedication and eagerness, Melanie inspired her entire educational team with her willingness to work hard despite overwhelming health challenges. Recognized with a “Self Determination” award at graduation, this remarkable young lady showed great progress using her communication switch to effectively relay messages and interact during recreation and leisure time. Described as patient and loving, Melanie kept busy at school with her on-campus jobs including paper-shredding and working as a greeter in the School store, “The Lion’s Den.” Following graduation, Melanie will attend the adult day program at Austin’s Place at the Woodlands and reside at home with her family.

TYLER J. RICH
Son of Debra Rich of Eighty-Four, Pennsylvania – Washington County

Always cooperative and friendly, Tyler Rich is described by his instructor as a focused and determined student known for his big, brown eyes and outgoing social skills. He has become extremely adept using his Eye Gaze technology device to communicate. His favorite activities include listening to music and playing games on the computer using his switch. His personality and work ethic were always on full display while he worked as a greeter informing customers at the school store of seasonal specials and daily deals. After graduating, Tyler plans on continuing his residential tenure at Allegheny Valley School and embarking on full-time status in their day program.

SEBASTIAN NATHANIAL SHROYER
Son of Guy and Susan Shroyer of Masontown, Pennsylvania – Fayette County

Sebastian Shroyer, affectionately known as Bas, was recognized as “Most Improved” by his instructor at graduation. This honor was given in reflection of his accomplishments in following directions, self-care management, choice-making and interacting with his peers. While at WPSBC, Bas enjoyed riding his adapted tricycle and going out into the community during Orientation and Mobility trips. He became proficient at many vocational tasks including vacuuming, obtaining linens and pricing merchandise at the School store. After graduation, Sebastian plans on attending The Arc of Fayette County’s adult training facility and will receive communication services through California University of Pennsylvania, while residing at home with his family.

PAIGE DANIELLE SHEA
Daughter of Patrick and Rita Shea of Carmichaels, Pennsylvania – Greene County

With a sweet personality and a smile that lights up a room, Paige made the most of her time at WPSBC, thriving and becoming more independent in many ways. She learned to communicate her preferences and emotions with objects and symbols, enjoyed attending Creative Arts performances, being a Roaring Lions cheerleader and loved bowling and playing adapted sports. Paige’s never-give-up attitude was notable in all aspects of her school life, from her vocational work making deliveries and taking inventory to her untiring efforts putting one foot in front of another while traveling and using her walker. After graduation, Paige plans on attending the Learning Adventures for the Visually Impaired program at the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children and receiving communication services through California University of Pennsylvania, while residing at home with her family.
Fourteen charming youngsters sang these words to the tune of “New York, New York” on Wednesday, June 1, to an adoring crowd of family, friends and school staff members. Celebrated on a bright, sunny day in the campus’ Children’s Garden, the event marked the end of these boys and girls’ preschool experience at the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children and the beginning of their next educational journey: kindergarten.

Welcomed to the ceremony by WPSBC School Superintendent Todd Reeves, each child was announced and made their way to the podium in traditional mortarboard and gown to receive his or her promotion certificate. Early Childhood Director Rebecca Renshaw, addressed the crowd telling parents that “each and every child has achieved goals and developmental milestones that many could never have imagined.”

For preschool-aged children with visual impairment, with or without additional challenges, the Early Childhood Department at WPSBC provides individualized educational programming to foster school readiness while giving full consideration to the impact of vision impairment. For eleven of these students, the next step is enrolling in the WPSBC school-age educational program, which is specifically designed for individuals with vision impairment coupled with other severe physical and cognitive disabilities. The remaining three students will be transitioning to kindergarten in their local public schools, where they will attend classes with their typically developing peers.

“There are not enough kind words to describe the school’s supportive staff,” remarked Stephanie Shakespeare, a mother of a preschool graduate. “From the time we started coming for early intervention services until now, they have pushed her to accomplish so much more than we ever thought possible.”

Graduation to kindergarten is an important transition on a child’s path to adulthood and marking the occasion helps build confidence and assurance. For parents, like Jody and Wendy Hornak, preschool graduation was a proud moment that allowed them to reflect on how far their son Joseph had come commenting, “When he was born it was all about what he can’t do. Now it’s all about what he can do.”
The Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children congratulates two of its staff members for recently winning recognition for their incredible dedication and commitment to their professions.

In April, WPSBC Outreach Instructor, Holly Russell, received the “Richard L. Welsh Service Award” from the Pennsylvania-Delaware Chapter Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (Penn-Del AER) at its annual Spring Vision Conference. Honored by her peers, this prize is given to a recognized professional in the education or rehabilitation of those with blindness and/or visual impairment who has demonstrated outstanding impact on the field and the chapter.

Since the early 1990s, Russell has served in many capacities for the chapter including on the website and conference planning committees as well as on the Board. As a certified Teacher of the Visually Impaired and Orientation and Mobility Specialist, Russell works with a variety of students in their educational setting, coordinating direct services with teachers and completing functional vision evaluations. “She’s a quiet and creative leader who continues to be an integral part of our chapter,” said Debby Holzapfel, Chair of the Penn-Del AER Award Committee.

In May, the School had another reason to celebrate as Nurse Joyce Cotroneo was presented with the “Highmark Foundation 2016 Advancing Excellence in School Nursing – Spirit of the Year Award.” Nominated by her WPSBC nursing colleagues, Cotroneo has provided compassionate, skilled nursing services to our students for 25 years.

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Cotroneo is a part of team of nurses that serves on the frontlines for a student population that is unique, fragile and often cannot speak for themselves. “Joyce acquaints herself with the often complex health history of each new youngster enrolled in her caseload, and calls upon that knowledge with obvious ease in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of nursing care for each,” said her supervisor Health Services Director Maryanne Loebig. “Her clinical nursing skills are superb, always paired with a reassuring smile.”

Cotroneo was presented with her award by Highmark Foundation President Yvonne Cook at a school assembly in May. Commemorating National School Nurse Day, the Highmark Foundation created the awards to honor and recognize the important role that school nurses play in keeping children healthy. Award winners each receive $1,500 to use for professional development or health-related programs at their respective schools.
Please Support Our Collective Vision of Independence

At WPSBC, our goal is to provide our students with a stimulating and open educational environment where they can participate to their fullest. In many ways, their school life resembles that of their peers. They have art class and physical education, attend Prom and go on field trips. But, as you can imagine, their unique health and sensory needs require specialized supports.

The task of training students who are severely disabled is intensive and correspondingly expensive. Donations are vital and allow us to meet needs of hundreds of western Pennsylvania students who truly deserve our support.

Contributions are sincerely appreciated and can be made by returning the enclosed envelope or securely on our website: www.wpsbc.org.

Mission Statement: The Mission of the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children is to be a leading educational facility and Outreach provider. The School offers a full range of exceptional individualized special education services fostering maximum independence for students with visual impairment, including blindness and other challenges, and provides support and resources to families and the community.