



# Tiger TRADITIONS

*Inspiring Excellence and Leadership in All!*

Fall 2022 Volume 28 • Issue 2

## Palermo Elementary celebrates recertification as Lighthouse School

Dancing, laughter and fantastic drumbeats helped Palermo Elementary School celebrate its recertification as a Leader in Me Lighthouse School.

In 2018, Palermo Elementary, which serves grades pre-kindergarten through fourth in the Mexico Academy & Central School District, became one of just 421 such Leader in Me Lighthouse Schools in the entire world. A Lighthouse School serves as a beacon for other schools that are currently part of the Leader in Me process.

Leader in Me Schools use a Lighthouse Rubric to measure outcomes in three areas: teaching leadership principles, creating a leadership culture and aligning academic systems. Schools also measure their success as it relates to their unique school. Within this structure, the staff supports students in discovering their leadership potential. Students use these gifts to contribute to their classrooms and some hold schoolwide leadership roles. Students grow in their ability to set goals for learning and track their progress. The 8 Habits of Leader in Me are tools to help students develop in many areas including: self-control, empathy, determination, prioritization, teamwork and seeing the value they bring to this world.

"We are so proud of the staff and students who have implemented these leadership habits as a way to improve learning and our school culture," said Palermo Principal Peggy Scorzelli. "You are going to have some valuable skills that will help you be successful as learners and as friends. When you apply the eight Leadership Habits to your choices, they can also help you live a healthier life."

Palermo first became a Leader in Me School in 2014, a Lighthouse School in 2018 and was recertified in mid-October 2022, maintaining its Lighthouse status. Through the years, Palermo Elementary has been committed to teaching students leadership principles. There are just 16 Lighthouse schools in New York state and Palermo is the only one in central New York.

During this time, several Lighthouse facilitators have led staff through the process. This includes Karen Allen, retired teacher, Robert Teifke, now a teacher at New Haven Elementary, and currently Sarah Herrington, teaching assistant, and Tiffany Carpenter, librarian.

The whole school was in attendance for an assembly where Scorzelli talked about the honor of being a Lighthouse School. Music instructor Glen Gagnier led the chorus in singing, "Flashlight" by Jessie J. and Student Lighthouse team members lit a ceremonial lighthouse and unveiled a new positivity project.

"Palermo Elementary School, we all have greatness inside of us. So, let's shine our lights and make this world a better place," Scorzelli said. "Remember, it's important to be leaving a legacy that we can be proud of."

After the ceremony, students and staff danced to the sounds and entertainment of DownBeat Percussion, which is a drumline that performs at Buffalo Bills NFL games.

***More information about Leader In Me can be found at [leaderinme.org](http://leaderinme.org).***





# A message from the Superintendent

Dear MACS School Family and Community,



As I was considering some thoughts to share in this issue of Tiger Traditions, a quote from Maya Angelou came to mind. "This is a wonderful day. I've never seen this one before." Each day we have new opportunities to gain experience and grow as we navigate our world. Our teachers plan and deliver instruction based on New York Learning Standards and also nurture and guide our scholars socially and emotionally. I am

grateful for their expertise and dedication.

Our other staff are diligent in supporting our students to be successful. I appreciate their conscientious willingness to ensure that our students have a safe, clean learning

environment and are fed and transported with care. Living, working, and learning as part of the Mexico Academy & Central School District is a privilege and a joy.

I also value the relationship that the district has with our families and community. You often hear me say that we hold hands and cross the street together. This partnership is vital to the success of our students.

In this, the season of being grateful, thank you for your support as we seek to fulfill our vision to be recognized as a school district that inspires excellence and leadership in all!

Respectfully,

*Donna Runner*  
**Dr. Donna Runner**  
**Superintendent**

## MS explores a day in the life of Lake Ontario

A total of 150 Mexico Middle School students in early October spent about four hours exploring and investigating Lake Ontario plus one of its tributaries, the Little Salmon River.

A dozen Department of Environmental Conservation staff joined grade seven science teachers Alicia Archer and Hope Pelton to present six learning stations throughout the park. Students participated in a beach cleanup, land and water assessments, water chemistry and an aquatic insect investigation.

"The goal was to deepen understanding of the Lake Ontario ecosystem and to promote stewardship of our local natural resources," said Archer. "Even I was surprised to learn that Lake Ontario is considered under the most 'stress' out of all the Great Lakes."

Stressors of lakes include coastal development, overfishing, invasive species and agricultural and urban pollutants, Archer said. She added that a recent study by SUNY Oswego found 80 percent of the fish they caught in Lake Ontario were found to have microplastics in them.

The student summit event was a collaboration between Cornell University, NY Sea Grant, NYS Parks and the DEC. Officials told students Lake Ontario has the most plastic pollution of the five Great Lakes, and it is targeted for more research in 2023.

Middle school students removed more than 1,000 pieces of plastic trash during their beach cleanup, stopping them from entering Lake Ontario.





## 5 MACS students selected to Area All-State

A total of five students represented Mexico Academy & Central Schools at the area all-state festivals this fall, earning the massive honor by ranking high enough in their instrument or voice parts.

Students honored included Emily Bennett, Cosette Laffan, Avery Oakes, Abby Trani and Jacob Upcraft.

“We are so incredibly proud of our talented student musicians for accomplishing this feat,” said Mexico Superintendent Dr. Donna Runner. “They should take pride in how hard they have worked and know we’ll all be supporting and rooting them on as they prepare for their prestigious concerts.”

All recognized students were selected based on their solo performances at the NYSSMA solo festival last May. Student performance scores are ranked against similar instruments or voice parts to create an honor band and choir of the top students in various parts of the state.

Bennett (saxophone), Laffan (French horn), Oakes (voice – tenor) and Trani (voice – soprano), all students at Mexico High School, were selected to the Zone 4 Senior High Area All-State Festival in Little Falls.

Upcraft, who plays clarinet and attends Mexico Middle School, was selected to the Zone 3 Junior High Area All-State Festival, which took place at Fayetteville-Manlius High School.

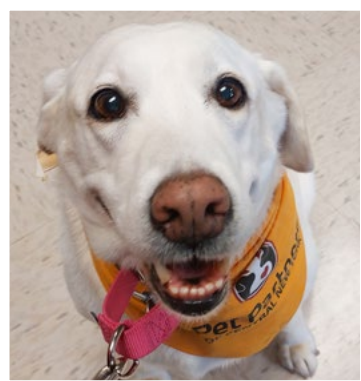


*Pictured are Mexico Academy & Central School District students who were selected to compete in area all-state festivals. They are, from left, Avery Oakes (voice – tenor), Abby Trani (voice – soprano), Jacob Upcraft (clarinet), Cosette Laffan (French horn) and Emily Bennett (saxophone).*

## Sounds of Fall: High School band and chorus concert

Mexico High School band and chorus students held their fall concert in mid-October in the Avery Skinner Auditorium. More than 100 students in total performed throughout the night, and the concert featured the school’s Mixed Choir, Symphonic Band, Treble Choir, Select Choir, Jazz Ensemble and Combined Choirs.

The show was directed by music instructors Brian Carnes and Laura Washburn. The winter high school holiday concert is scheduled for Dec. 7 at 7 p.m.



**Boop that Nose**

## Stewart’s supports Mexico MS therapy dog program

Toes are tapping and her tail is wagging as Kee the service dog makes her way through the halls of Mexico Middle School.

Thanks to a \$250 donation in support of the school’s therapy dog program from Stewart’s Shops, Kee and her handler, Sandy, from Pet Partners of CNY is promoting health and wellness throughout Mexico Middle School, which serves grades five through eight in the Mexico district.

Middle School Principal Kim Holliday, who applied for the donation, thanked Stewart’s Shops for their generous support of the program, noting their contribution has already impacted

morale and made a difference.

“When Kee is here you can feel the joy from our students and staff alike, everyone wants to stop, pet and interact with her,” said Holliday. “We are looking forward to her upcoming visits as she provides a calming, loving atmosphere that helps to alleviate adversities.”

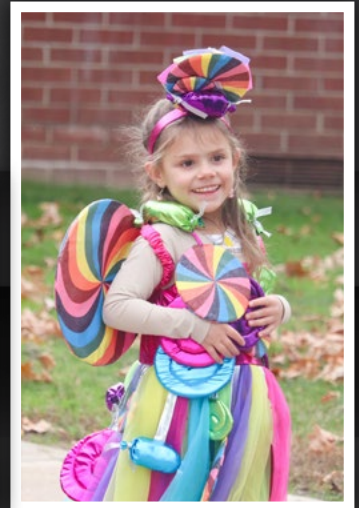
Holliday credited school social worker Tiffany Devendorf for being the driving force behind the partnership with Pet Partners of CNY and such an advocate for the therapy dog program.



# Mexico Elementary parades through village on Halloween



Students from Mexico Elementary paraded through the village on Halloween, making the annual trek around the block to show off their outfits to a large gathering of family, friends and community. The parade was led by Principal Lisa Voegler, followed by all of the students in kindergarten through fourth grade. After the walk, students returned to their classroom for Halloween parties.



# HAPPY HALLOWEEN





## MACS ready to start 'Chain Reaction' of kindness, understanding

The last school essay that Rachel Scott wrote theorized that a chain reaction of kindness began with just one person going out of their way to show compassion or be kind.

Hundreds of Mexico High School students and staff, along with Board of Education members and Superintendent Dr. Donna Runner, learned from this powerful message during a program titled Chain Reaction that was inspired by Scott. She was the first person killed in the Columbine High School shooting in 1999.

Chain Reaction's goals are to increase personal power and self-esteem, to shift dangerous peer pressure to positive peer support and to address the issues of violence, teasing, social oppression, racism, harassment, conflict management, suicide, alcohol and drugs.

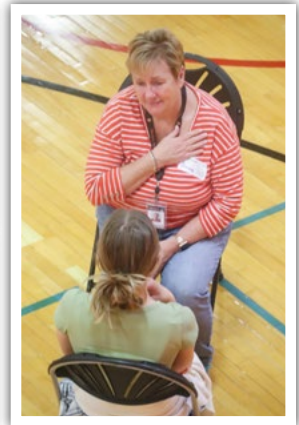
"We hope students take away the understanding that we are all unique and different, but also connected more than we realize," said Meg Farrell, an English teacher at Mexico High School who coordinated the program. "We hope they take away a deeper understanding of kindness, compassion and acceptance when interacting with all of their peers and community."

Chain Reaction is run through Rachel's Challenge, an organization created in Scott's memory to reduce violence and promote kindness. The program, which takes place throughout an entire school day, has a high-energy atmosphere with several activities in which youth and adult participants are guided through a series of experiential learning processes.

Freshmen and sophomores from Mexico High School participated in the program the first day, with juniors and seniors the following day. Student participation in the event was voluntary, and more than 200 chose to take part between the two days.

Farrell advises the school's Friends of Rachel Club, which inspires and promotes acts of kindness, tolerance and compassion in school and the community. The club holds fundraising and community service events throughout the year, having raised close to \$400 for Operation Reindeer, a local event that provides toys and presents to children during the holiday season.

Students interested in joining the school's Friends of Rachel Club are more than welcome to join one of its meetings. The club meets every Tuesday from 2:15 to 2:45 p.m. in Room 105.



## Champs!

### Tigers win sectional cheerleading title

The Mexico Tigers varsity cheerleading team won the Section III Class C cheerleading championship on Saturday, Nov. 5 at West Genesee High School. The fall team consisted of Emma Cadrette, Brianna Coe, Marley Eastman, Mckenzie Emmons, Kierstyn Ford, Karyna Gasper, Harley Potter and Alyssa Webster. The varsity head coach is Jackie Blasier and the JV coach, who assists with varsity as well, is Molly Blasier.



Photo courtesy of John Rathbun, Executive Director of Section III Athletics



## Mexico wins first OCAY League event of '22-23



Mexico's team came out on top as students from eight local school districts recently competed in the Oswego County Academic Youth (OCAY) League's first competition of the school year at Selkirk Shores State Park in Pulaski.

Participants learned about the Oregon Trail and were tasked with various survivalist and naturalist tasks including fungi identification, building a fire large enough to burn through a suspended piece of string, constructing a travois sturdy enough to carry a person, and carrying water to a designated location in the park as a team.

Donning color-coded bandanas to represent their home districts, students raced against time – and up and down foliage-ridden pathways – to various pavilion "camp sites," while other tasks were judged on level of completion and quality.

Students also participated in logic puzzles and other activities during their down time in an attempt to solve for a "mystery number" that would unlock a padlocked door to the final destination pavilion where food, drinks, and awards were distributed.

MACS placed first at the event, followed by Hannibal in second place and APW in third.

The first-place team from Mexico was comprised of students Daniel Gagnier, Hunter Hall, Collin Hatch, Ryan Jackson, Sage LaFlamm, Avery Mack, Sean McWilliams and William Mills. Mexico's OCAY League advisor is MHS English teacher Shannon Bigelow.

OCAY League was organized in the spring of 1997 with the idea that academics merit a standing comparable to athletics. Students' academic skills are challenged and showcased in a wide variety of competitive events that emphasize scholastic excellence, team building, leadership and creativity. A particular strength of the league is its emphasis on cooperative problem-solving. Teams are made up of eight to 10 members and compete in several events throughout the school year.

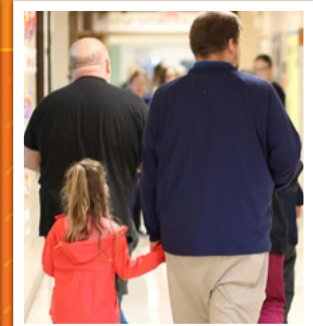
OCAY League is coordinated through the Center for Instruction, Technology & Innovation's gifted and talented program. For more information, contact OCAY League Coordinator Caitlin White.

## New Haven Elementary holds Open House

Students, families and friends strolled through the halls of New Haven Elementary recently for the school's Open House. Students were able to partake in activities and have their families meet their teachers and other staff they interact with on a daily basis.

New Haven Elementary serves hundreds of students in pre-K through fourth grade.

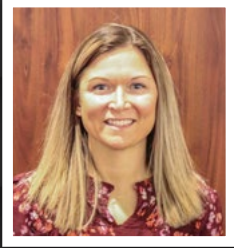
"It was great to see our students and get a chance to meet their parents and families," said New Haven Principal Jennifer Granholm. "We have a wonderful community in New Haven, and having everyone out for Open House is always such a great tradition."





# Proud to be MACS

## Nicole Nash, October 2022



The Board of Education honored Mexico Elementary 8:1:1 classroom teacher Nicole Nash as the Proud to be MACS recipient for October 2022.

Nicole is a MACS alumna herself, graduating from Mexico High School in 2003. After graduation, she was unsure what career path to follow but after working as a teaching assistant with special education students at CiTi (then-Oswego County

BOCES), she found her niche.

In 2012, Nicole graduated with a bachelor's degree in childhood education and master's degree in special education from SUNY Oswego.

After graduating from Oswego, she began her teaching career at Mexico Elementary and has been there since. Nicole remembers attending Mexico Elementary as a student and credited retired teacher Linda Daley as a huge inspiration to her.

Along the way, Nicole married Ben and they reside in the village of Mexico together.

Usually Nicole's 8:1:1 class is comprised of older students (third- and fourth-graders) but this year she also has first-grade students. This mix is challenging, Nicole said, but she enjoys witnessing the older students serving as role models for the younger ones.

"Nikki has worked diligently to make our room a better environment for our students' learning. Her patience with our students is endless and so amazing to witness," nominator Brenda Honebein said. "She teaches respect and makes the students in the room feel wanted and loved."

When asked about the favorite part of her job, Nicole loves working with her students and seeing the smiles. Given the challenges of instructing, Nicole appreciates and celebrates all of the small successes of her students.

## Karlene Krzyewski, November 2022



High school teaching assistant Karlene Krzyewski, who runs the school's Distance Learning program, was celebrated as the November 2022 Proud to be MACS award-winner.

Karlene grew up in Hornell (Steuben County) and attended Keuka College where she earned her bachelor's degree with a math major and an accounting minor.

After graduation, Karlene married Rick whose experience serving in the U.S. Navy and his degree led him to a position with Alcan Aluminum (now Novelis) in Oswego. They were blessed with children Amanda, Nikki and Daniel along the way – and will soon be grandparents for the first time with daughter Nikki expecting.

In 1986, after a few years with Howard's Office Supply, Karlene answered an ad for a substitute position with MACS. She spent two months as a substitute and then two years as a teaching assistant at Mexico High School. After stepping away to have Nikki and Daniel, Karlene returned to MACS in 1995 as a sub.

In 1999, she assumed a teaching assistant position at Mexico Middle School before returning to the high school in 2012.

In September 2017, Karlene started the school's Distance Learning program, which today serves 35 students, with 28 of the students meeting three times per week for online courses and seven students meeting daily for a session of a video course.

Another benefit to her to her Distance Learning students is that Karlene attempts to teach them valuable life lessons like preparing them to meet deadlines and encouraging them to communicate with their professors.

As for her favorite part of the job, Karlene loves working with her students and seeing the accomplishment of her students as they earn college credits. As for her favorite memory, it was the awesome job her students in public speaking did during COVID. Karlene was impressed with their honesty and emotion.

# Nohle named Mexico Middle School assistant principal

A lifelong educator who also has a wealth of experience with community affairs and supporting students has been named the new assistant principal at Mexico Middle School.

The Mexico Academy and Central School District welcomed Laurie Nohle to the administrative position in late September, filling the role at the grades five through eight school.

"We are incredibly excited to have Laurie as a member of the MACS family," said MACS Superintendent Dr. Donna Runner. "In meeting with Laurie and speaking with her professional colleagues, we are confident that we are bringing in someone who will advocate for our scholars and help them achieve district and personal goals."

Nohle is familiar with Oswego County and its school system, as she earned her master's degree and Certificate of Advanced Study in Educational Leadership from SUNY Oswego. She also attended Jefferson Community College

and Utica College of Syracuse University.

In her previous administrative experiences, Nohle was an elementary principal and an assistant principal/athletic director for the General Brown school district. Before that, she spent 13 years as a history teacher at South Jefferson and worked at that time as an academic intervention service teacher and PBIS leader of the positive behavioral interventions and supports program.

She has also worked to serve her school community as a school board member for the Belleville-Henderson Central School District from 2013-18. Nohle was Key Club advisor for South Jefferson, plus a JV and youth softball coach at Belleville-Henderson.

Nohle, who began her position at MACS on Sept. 19, said she has been very excited to meet the staff and students around the building as she settles in.



## **BOARD OF EDUCATION**

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Darlene Upcraft - *Vice President*  
Chad Bigelow  
Dennis Brooks  
Amy Shaw  
Susan Teifke  
Sobrina Vazquez  
Luke Kinsey - *Student Representative*

## **SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

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# Mexico HS Drama Club stages 'Sherlock Holmes: The Baker Street Irregulars'

The Avery Skinner Auditorium was filled two nights as the Mexico High School Drama Club staged "Sherlock Holmes: The Baker Street Irregulars" in early November.



## **CAST LIST**

Natalie Babcock: Mrs. Hudson  
Tristan Breckenridge: Dr. Watson  
Kieran Henderson: Wiggins  
Abigayle Trani: Pockets  
Kaden Perry: Chen  
Robert Babcock: Tiny  
Cali Hopp: Ash  
Thi Amber Huynh: Eliza Mayhew  
Zander Mason: Richard Mayhew

Brayden Scott: Peabody  
Anna Fox: Inspector Lestrade  
Mara Macomber: Morris Wiggins  
Rosina Hawkins: Sherlock Holmes  
Dominic Seymour: Moriarty  
Analis Morales: Townspeople/  
Police  
Amaya Manzano: Townspeople/  
Henchmen

Alissa Wilson: Father  
Hailey Lindsley: Mother  
Kaleigh Hartle: Townspeople  
Sarah Brooks: Henchmen; Arthur  
Schyler Ives: Townspeople/  
Mayor's Daughter  
Mikayla Towner: Police Officer  
Josie Metcalf: Henchmen  
Halie Knight: Towns People/

Henchmen  
Kaylee Messick: Tall Thin Man  
Riley Gagnier: Townspeople/  
Young Wiggins  
Backstage Hand: Karlie Miller  
Tech Team: Aiden DeGroff,  
Dan Gagnier, & Mr. Brian Carnes  
Directed by: Miss Cassie Story