

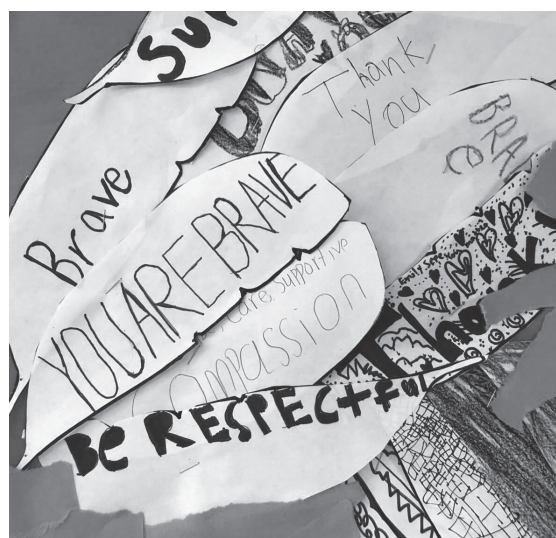
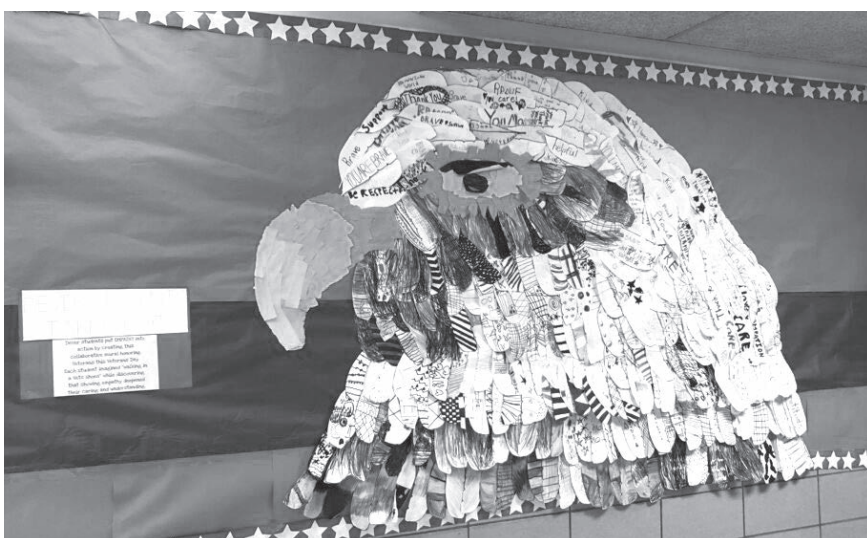


It's Elementary

VALLEY STREAM UFSD THIRTEEN

WINTER 2021

Student-Made Mural a Reminder of Sacrifices Made by Veterans



Art is taught in schools all over the world for many reasons. One of the most important is art education's ability to foster empathy and understanding. Last fall, art educator and District Coordinator of Fine Arts Janis Boremski incorporated November's character trait, empathy, into her student curriculum at Dever Elementary School. She found the perfect way to do it, which was by having students create a beautiful Veterans Day bald eagle display.

Students at Dever have been striving to put themselves in someone else's shoes as a way to learn empathy. The mural project was a natural extension of that work, forcing students to take a moment to consider what it would be like to make such an immense sacrifice for their country. The beautiful mural, which includes messages written by the students, will stay up in the halls of Dever as a reminder of the sacrifices veterans make and as an emblem of empathy.

Enhancing creativity while teaching valuable character traits directly aligns with the Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen's belief that social and emotional intelligence is essential to effective teaching and learning, sound decision making, physical and mental health and success in school and beyond.

We are proud to honor those Americans who sacrifice so much for our country.

"There are many Veteran empathy projects nationwide. Showing empathy—as opposed to simply honoring our vets—is found to have a better impact on Veterans reintegrating into life after serving in our armed forces."

- District Art Coordinator
Janis Boremski

A letter from the Superintendent

The calendar may read 2021, however, in many ways we are still impacted by the remarkable events of 2020. The pandemic that uprooted our lives in March of last year carries on, and we remain vigilant in keeping our students, families, and staff safe. I would like to praise and thank our teachers, staff, faculty, and building and grounds crew of Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen. These men and women are essential by every definition of this word. And because of their diligence and dedication to our safety protocols, we have not had to shut down any school due to the pandemic during the 2020-2021 school year. Their actions are truly heroic.

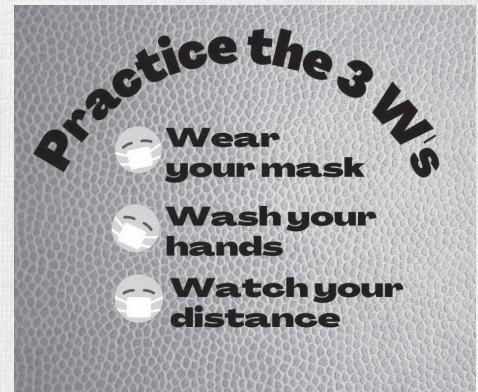
Despite the trials of COVID, much of school life at Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen has progressed in ways that continue to critically support students and families. Our students continue to learn, grow, and achieve at high levels. Our teachers have persisted in finding new ways to engage our children that are stimulating and thoughtful, and they have truly reinvigorated our curricular offerings. Our facilities staff has also continued to make progress in their Herculean efforts to keep our schools clean and adaptable to this unique era in public education.

Of course, the other part of this equation is you, the community. You have been our critical partner in this challenge since day one, and we are grateful for your committed support. We humbly respect how much time it takes to keep up this level of engagement, and we encourage you to stay in touch with us utilizing the many upcoming opportunities. Follow us on social media and our website and participate in ThoughtExchanges. And please be sure to stay up to date on our proposed budget this spring to inform your vote in May.

We are all in this together.

Sincerely,

Constance D. Evelyn, Ed.D., *Superintendent of Schools*



Checking in Around the District

HEART HEALTHY AND HEART SMART AT HOWELL ROAD

Alexis Reyes, a nurse at LIJ Forrest Hills, recently gave a vital virtual lesson to students at Howell Road Elementary School. Ms. Reyes taught students about the function of the heart, what it does for our body, and why it so important to be heart healthy. Her presentation included two x-ray examples—one of a healthy heart and one of a damaged heart—for the students to study. Perhaps the most important part of the presentation occurred when Nurse Reyes elaborated on the x-ray of the damaged heart. She pointed out the specific differences in the two x-rays and explained what caused the visible damage. This led into a conversation about the damaging effects of smoking tobacco and nicotine products—including cigarettes, cigars, vapes and e-cigarettes. In addition to talking about the terrible consequences for the heart, Ms. Reyes also mentioned how smoking can lead to cancer, bad breath, wrinkled skin, yellow teeth, and elimination from physical activities of all kinds.



Lesson topics don't get much more important than heart health, and we're so thankful Alexis Reyes stopped by to deliver this vital presentation!

WHEELER AVENUE STUDENTS TAKE PART IN THE ‘TIN FOIL CHALLENGE’

Recently, students at Wheeler Avenue Elementary School busted out the tin foil, but they weren't making cookies! They were actually participating in a challenging STEM-based learning activity. Fifth grade students in Mrs. L'Heureux's class participated in an engaging STEM experiment to understand the basics of the engineering design process. Students were given the challenge of building the tallest freestanding tower possible, with one catch—they were only allowed to use tin foil, not the roll or the box it came in; the tower had to stand on its own!



Students learned several valuable lessons throughout the project, not the least of which was the wider the base, the more stable the tower. At the end of the time given, Mrs. L'Heureux measured each tower and combined the heights. The goal was to be in the row of desks with the tallest combined tower height. After individually measuring the freestanding towers, Mrs. L'Heureux wrote the measurements on the board by row, so students could add their row up to determine the winning row. The winners had a total tower height of 139 ¼ inches. Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen continuously seeks to incorporate STEM into daily curriculum so that students can develop investigative, and creative skills that they can use in all areas of their lives.



AT WILLOW ROAD, KINDNESS IS KEY

During difficult times, kindness is more vital than ever. Certainly this is a truism that the students of Willow Road Elementary School know well, as they just embarked on The Great Kindness Challenge. Featuring daily celebrations and many acts of kindness—and organized through the efforts of District staff Michelle Lepe and Jamey Schecter—The Great Kindness Challenge spread kindness throughout the halls of Willow Road!

The week was highlighted by many different activities. Team Willow enjoyed dressing in a variety of themes—for example, a rock star, because “kindness rocks.” Students received a kind acts checklist and were encouraged to complete the list. During morning meetings, classes reflected on the meaning of kindness. There were discussions about how showing kindness to all—whether in school, home or in the community—makes the world a more peaceful place. Additionally, students spread kindness throughout the

building by posting notes of thanks and appreciation on doors for others. The Great Kindness Challenge highlighted our established norm of embracing a culture of kindness and compassion.

SNOW DAYS SHOULD STAY

In early February, a major winter storm hit the Tri-State area. One of the most significant snowstorms to hit the New York region in years, the storm pounded parts of Long Island with over a foot of snow. Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen, like districts all over the northeast, closed for a traditional snow day. We did this because we believe that snow days are a vital rite of passage for young students, whether they are in school buildings or learning at home.

So much emphasis has been placed on caring for our mental health as we all navigate this terrible pandemic. We must not lose sight of the fact that the mental health of our youngest children is paramount. While we are all cognizant of the importance of schooling and we must strive to make sure educational loss is minimized, kids need a chance to be kids. They need a break. They need to run around in the snow and laugh and build snowmen and—if only for a brief moment—forget that so much about the world has changed forever. We hope each of you took a moment to enjoy the beautiful snow with your loved ones.



A student from Wheeler plays in the snow during a recent storm.

Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen

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For the Environment—and our Bottom Line— Solar Power is a No Brainer

There are so many reasons for a school district to engage with solar power. First and foremost, a shift to solar power greatly reduces a district's carbon footprint, a crucial factor in counterbalancing the negative effects of climate change. Additionally, solar energy has the potential to greatly reduce a district's overall energy budget, also a critical need as we face an uncertain and potentially challenging economic future.

For these reasons—and, indeed, many more—the Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen entered into an energy performance contract with Honeywell Building Solutions in January of 2017. This energy performance contract provided Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen with a unique method of obtaining the latest energy-saving technology without having to frontload or bond the costs of those energy-saving systems.



The benefits of this initiative are becoming clear. Our payment plan for the installed system is set at 15 years. However, these devices have a lifespan that stretches beyond the 15-year payment window. Therefore, when the plan is over, Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen will begin to capture significant energy savings and generate additional positive cash flow.

Already we are beginning to see savings. According to a report provided by Honeywell, the District's estimated energy cost savings for the year 1 period are \$275,246, which equates to a savings of 28.26 percent.

Finances are not the only benefit; there are untold benefits for the environment from switching to solar. "We're huge proponents of reducing our carbon footprint," said Dr. Constance Evelyn, Superintendent of Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen. "Our District's commitment to energy conservation focuses not only on energy cost savings for the taxpayer, but also on integrating sustainability into student learning for future generations."