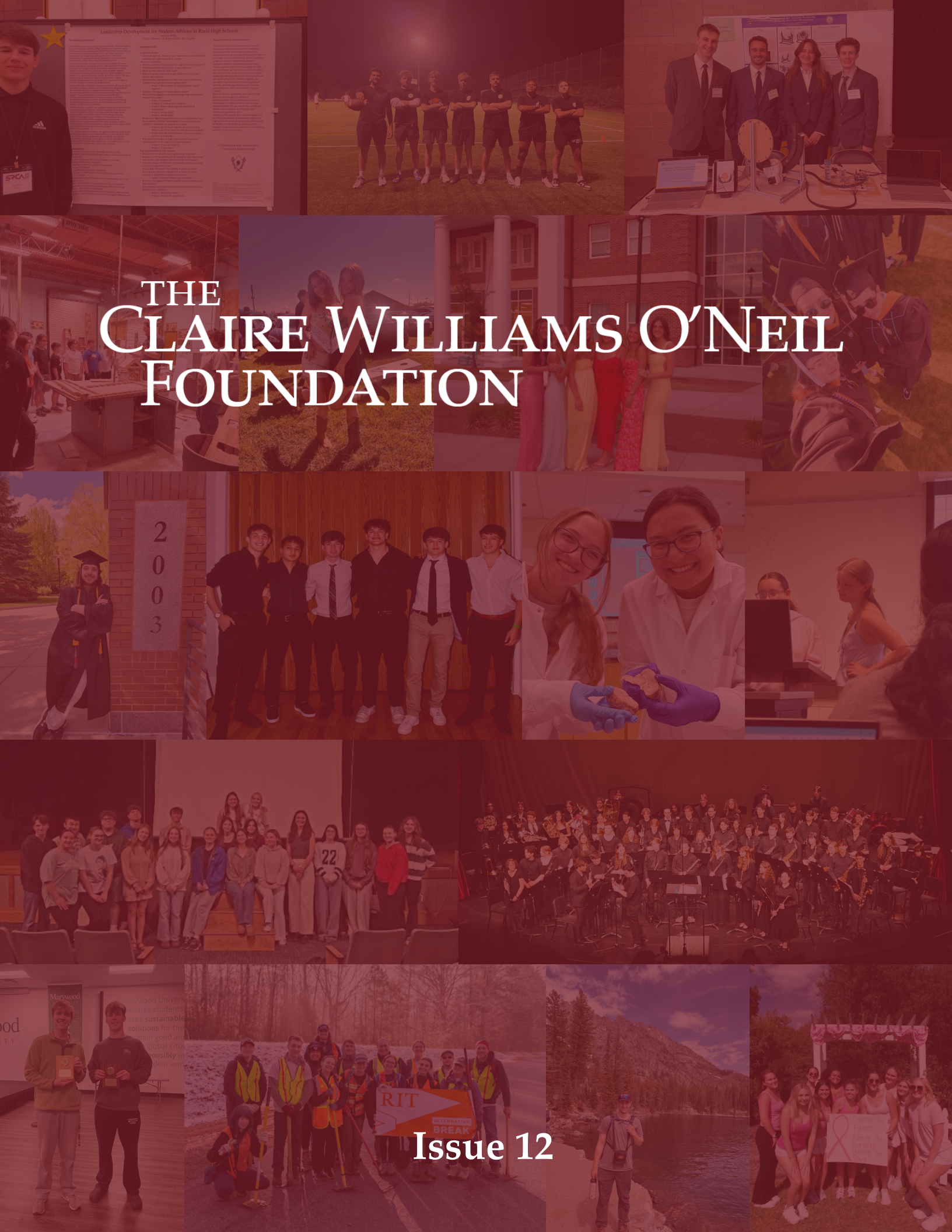


THE CLAIRE WILLIAMS O'NEIL FOUNDATION

Issue 12



THE CLAIRE WILLIAMS O'NEIL FOUNDATION

Dedicated to expanding educational opportunities for Susquehanna area youth.

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President's Message

This year, our Foundation awarded two scholarships—one to Molly Griga, who is studying elementary education at Marywood University, and one to Mason Opalka, who is enrolled in Penn State's civil engineering school.

Molly and Mason follow a long line of SCHS graduates who have received Claire Williams O'Neil Foundation (CWOF) scholarships for their college studies and gone on to attend top-level universities, including Texas A&M, Georgia Tech, Pittsburgh, Syracuse, Carnegie Mellon, Lehigh, NYU, Boston University, RIT, Notre Dame, Penn State, and Cornell.

Over the past 26 years, our Foundation has awarded $1.5 million in grants to our scholars. They have entered careers in such fields as art, medical technology, and business. Six of them studied engineering. Six more have earned doctorate degrees: one in veterinary medicine, another in pharmaceutics, two PhDs in science, one PhD in mathematics, and one M.D.

Susquehanna Community High School (SCHS) and the Susquehanna community can be proud of such a record. We have nurtured our youth not only to succeed in their studies and pursue serious careers, but also to go out into the world with deeply rooted values of helping each other and serving the community.

To ensure that such success stories continue in the future, the Foundation is fully backing SCHS's mentor program, Project Jump Start. Since the beginning of this program three years ago, CWOF's Board Associates have devoted themselves to this work. Last year, SCHS Principal Rich Emmons strengthened PJS by inviting four members of the faculty—Sarah Carpenetti, Kayle Gerchman, Kelly McCloskey, and Megan Truskolaski—to become faculty champions for the program.

The program's objective is to identify students who have the necessary ambition, academic ability, and drive to become part of the program; engage them early, at the beginning of their high school years; help them identify careers and aspirational colleges; and then counsel them on what they need to do during their high school careers to be successful.

The Foundation would like to thank all our PJS mentors and welcome these new faculty champions, who add a new dimension of support to this important program.

I would like to especially acknowledge three organizations that work with us to support SCHS. DT Midstream hosts field trips for SCHS students and conducts mock job interviews with students. The Honesdale National Bank conducts financial literacy courses at the School. The Susquehanna County Arts, Education and Healthy Community Fund for Wellness, through its director, Ken Goody, provides funds annually for projects nominated by school leadership.

To all who support our work by volunteering their time and to those who support us through donations, thank you.

To the leadership of the Susquehanna Community School District, we are grateful for the positive atmosphere of cooperation you have created with the CWOF, the work you do to prepare students who compete for our scholarships, and your continuing support and encouragement.

Roger O'Neil
CWOF President

2026 Scholarship Winners

Molly Griga



Molly is attending Marywood University where she is pursuing a degree in early childhood education. In high school, she was actively involved in Marching Band, Concert Band, Varsity Football Cheerleading, and was Captain of the archery team. Molly also participated in Drama Club, served as Yearbook Editor, and was a member of the Student Council Executive Board. In addition, she represented the student body on the SCSD District Board. Outside of high school, Molly held a variety of roles including Elementary School Aide and Fire and EMS responder. She was also named First Chair Bass Clarinet at this year's Marywood Wind Celebration and was recognized as the 2025 New Milford Rotary Junior of the Year.

"When reflecting upon my high school journey, I am grateful for the experiences I've had at SCHS. They shaped the person that I am today. If I had to pick an activity that meant the most to me, it would be our drama program. I went from a young eighth grader learning to sing and dance to a senior being the lead in the musical. It was such a full circle moment.

I chose Marywood because it is close to my forever hometown. I can still serve my community while furthering my education. Keeping the close bonds I have worked so hard to make is very important to me."

Mason Opalka



Mason is enrolled at Penn State University studying civil engineering. In high school, he was involved in a variety of extracurricular activities, including Boy Scouts, Ski Patrol, Track and Field, Cross Country, and scuba diving. His dedication to both the Boy Scouts and Ski Patrol involved hundreds of hours of community service, reflecting his strong commitment to helping others. Outside of school and extracurricular activities, he has gained valuable work experience through jobs in landscaping, at Arlo's Country Store, and with PennDOT.

"During my high school years, I developed values that will stay with me for the rest of my life. Through scouting, I learned the importance of leadership, responsibility, and being prepared for any situation I may face. Through ski patrol, I became comfortable handling stressful and unfamiliar situations while staying calm under pressure. In the classroom, I learned the importance of staying focused, working hard, and taking pride in the work that I do. And sports taught me that hard work and dedication are essential in every endeavor.

As I look back on my high school years, I realize how quickly the time passed. One thing I wish I had done more often was slow down and appreciate the moment instead of always focusing on what came next."

College Graduates

Meghan Kiernan

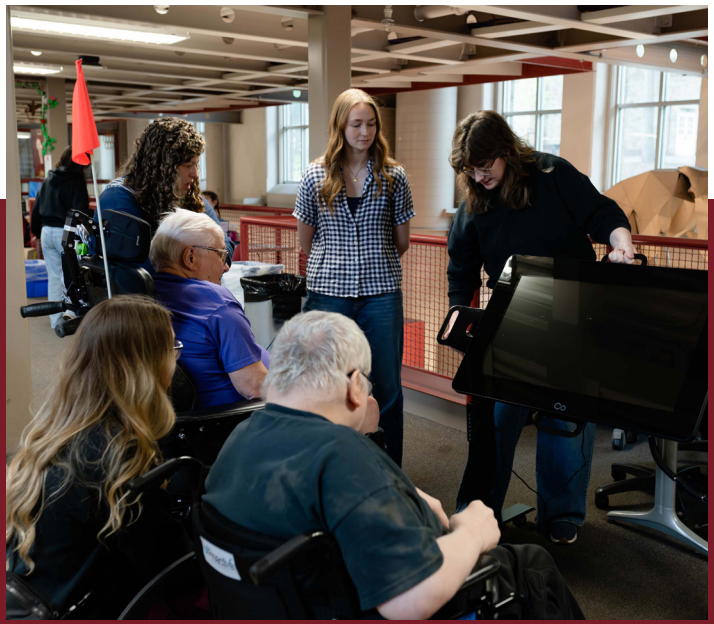
Lehigh University | BS Engineering, Arts, and Sciences



This spring, Meghan graduated from Lehigh University with a Bachelor of Science in the Engineering, Arts, and Sciences program, concentrating in Mechanical Engineering and Product Design.

During her time at Lehigh, Meghan distinguished herself both academically and as a campus leader. She earned Dean's List honors, served as an instructor intern with Cornell's RevIthaca Startup Works, worked as a tech fellow in Lehigh's Design Labs, instructed students in the Calculus Applications Lab, and served as a teaching assistant for first-year students. In recognition of her leadership, she received the 2026 Lehigh Alumni Pride Association Change Agent Award. Meghan also served as President of Lehigh's Out in STEM chapter and the Club Softball team.

In the spring, Meghan was approached by a professor from the math department to revamp a new course in Calculus II engineering applications. She was hired as the student instructor for the course, where she developed and taught coursework reinforcing Calculus II concepts through engineering and real-world applications. Responsibilities included designing, testing, and implementing hands-on projects integrating mathematical theory with practical problem-solving. Meghan independently led class sessions, developed instructional materials, and graded coursework while supporting student learning and conceptual understanding. Projects included CAD intro and 3D printing overview, a volume study, arc length study, surface area study, center of mass exploration, separable differential equation project, and a unit on a heart rate monitor project.



One example of Meghan's socially meaningful projects was a collaboration with a fellow student to design and manufacture an adjustable gaming table for wheelchair users at Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Center. Their design incorporated height-adjustable legs and a tilting trunnion system that allowed users to engage more comfortably and independently. The experience reinforced Meghan's commitment to using human-centered design and thoughtful engineering to improve accessibility and quality of life.

Above: A photo from Meghan's project at Good Shephard Rehabilitation Center.

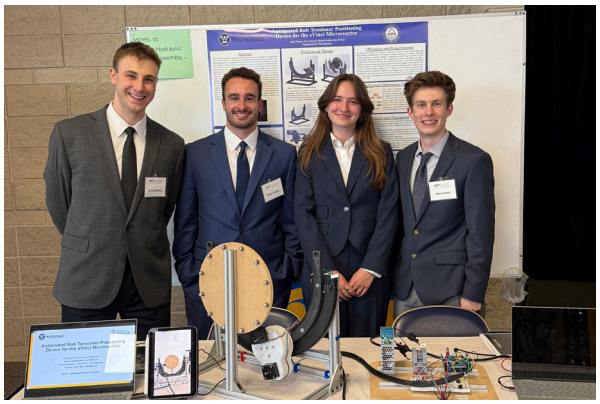
Joshua Marco

University of Pittsburgh | BS Mechanical Engineering



Josh, a recipient of the DTM scholarship, graduated magna cum laude from the University of Pittsburgh with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering and has begun working full-time as an Applications Engineer with Universal Instruments.

During his time at the University of Pittsburgh, Josh completed two summer internships as an engineering intern with Schott North America. He also gained additional experience while working part-time as an engineering intern with Magnify Biosciences.



In his final semester, Josh and his senior design team partnered with Westinghouse Electric Corporation to design and prototype an automated bolt tensioner positioning device for the company's eVinci microreactor. Their project earned second place among mechanical engineering teams at the University of Pittsburgh Senior Design Expo, recognizing the team's innovative work and successful collaboration.

Left: Josh and his team at the Swanson School of Engineering Senior Design Expo.

Joseph Staria

Rochester Institute of Technology | BS Game Design & Development

Joe graduated magna cum laude from Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) this spring with a degree in game design and development. This summer, he began working full time with General Dynamics Mission Systems in Massachusetts as a software engineer. During his time at RIT, Joe served as an Ambassador for the Game Design and Development program, helping to represent the major and support prospective and current students.

In reflecting on his own experience, Joe emphasized the importance of balancing academic success with personal interests and extracurricular involvement. His advice for future college students is to stay focused on their studies, pursue their passions, build meaningful connections, and enjoy the college experience.



"College life is and has always been about keeping your grades up, but more importantly about making friends and future connections. In my final year, I found myself mourning the experiences I will not be able to continue making at RIT and the additional friends I might have made if I had devoted a little bit more time. My advice for those still in high school is to be proactive in finding what you love to do, and develop friends who encourage you to become your best self."

Current Scholars

Juliann Downton

University of South Florida | BS in Biomedical Sciences & Economics



Juli is now a senior at the University of South Florida (USF), on track to graduate this spring with a Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences and a Bachelor of Arts in Economics. She is actively involved in service and wellness organizations on campus, including the Humane Society of Tampa Bay and Glamour Gals, a national organization dedicated to visiting retirement communities to spend time with seniors. Juli also recently joined Girls Who Walk, a club focused on promoting wellness, friendship, and community through group walks.

In addition to her academic and volunteer commitments, Juli works as a group fitness instructor, teaching pilates, barre, and flexibility classes. During the fall semester, Juli completed her Honors Capstone project, collaborating with a team of four students to develop a comprehensive proposal for a Regional Security Operations Center on behalf of Hillsborough County. The team conducted extensive research, evaluated potential partnerships, and provided periodic briefings to stakeholders, culminating in the creation of a final business operating model.



"When I was in high school, I thought I knew exactly what I wanted to do. After my first year at USF, I began to doubt this was the right path for me, so I adjusted my focus and added a second major to start looking at all my options. My best advice to SCHS students is to not lock yourself into one path or career too soon. There are so many different options out there that you likely have not explored, and it is incredibly difficult to know exactly who you are and what you want to do when you are just starting out. Don't be afraid to push yourself out of your comfort zone! Try new things, visit new places, and meet new people. It will help you better understand the world around you as well as who you are as an individual."



Above: A photo from the Spanish class Juli took this Spring.

Right: A photo of some of the Group Fitness Instructors after going to a hot yoga sculpt class to celebrate another successful year.

Cooper Payne

Pennsylvania College of Technology | AAS in HVAC



Cooper, a recipient of the 2024 DT Midstream Scholarship, is currently enrolled at Pennsylvania College of Technology, where he is pursuing a degree in Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC). He is scheduled to graduate with an Associate of Applied Science in the spring of 2027.

Reilly Potter

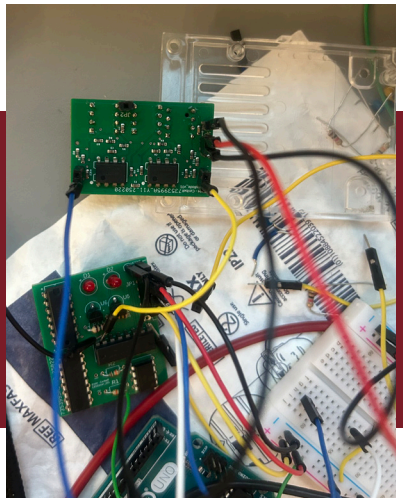
Cornell University | BS in Electrical & Computer Engineering

Reilly, a senior at Cornell University, is pursuing a degree in electrical and computer engineering with a minor in robotics. He also is actively involved in music, serving as Drum Captain for the Cornell Big Red Marching Band and performing with the Cornell Indoor Drumline. Reilly is also a member of the Engineering World Health project team. Through this organization, he collaborates with Ceribell, a medical technology company, to design and test a wearable electroencephalogram (EEG) device used for seizure detection. Last summer, he expanded his engineering experience through an internship with EZSoft Inc., a systems integration company based in Malvern, Pennsylvania.



As part of his work with Engineering World Health, Reilly has contributed to the development of a pulse oximeter device that measures blood oxygen saturation levels. The device utilizes a photodiode to detect the amount of light that passes through the skin, which calculates the percentage of oxygen in the blood.

Reilly reflects on how he transitioned from SCHS into the advanced coursework at Cornell and how he navigated the rigorous challenges in his engineering program. He had to find the balance between academic and professional development and taking advantage of the opportunities and experiences available both on campus and in the Ithaca community.



"College can take up lots of time you might want to spend elsewhere. Long hours doing homework, studying, finishing up projects, etc. is unavoidable, but it's important to remember how many other opportunities exist around you. There's so much to explore and experience. Seeing what exists around you outside of studies is one of the most important things I've learned, and it's allowed me to see all the amazing things Cornell and Ithaca have to offer."

Left: A photo from Reilly's development of a pulse oximeter device circuit.

Paytyn Sellitto

University of North Carolina Wilmington | BS in Biology



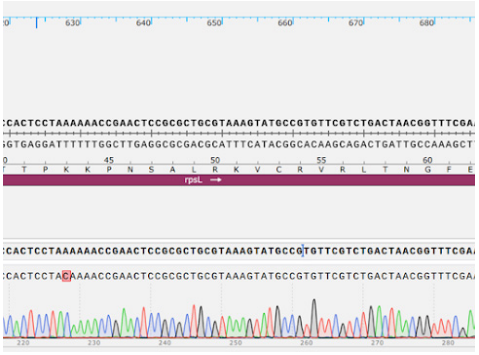
Paytyn is entering her final year at the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW), where she is on track to graduate a year early with a Bachelor of Science in Biology. After transferring from Syracuse University following her freshman year, she received the UNCW Gold Transfer Academic Award Scholarship and has earned a place on the dean's list. Outside the classroom, Paytyn is also an active member of the university's CHAARG Club, Run Club, and Pre-Med Club.

During the spring semester, Paytyn completed a 15-week research project investigating how bacteria develop antibiotic resistance, an increasingly important area of study in medicine and public health. Her research focused on Escherichia coli (E. coli) and its ability to acquire resistance to streptomycin, an antibiotic that normally prevents bacterial growth by disrupting protein synthesis.. Her findings supported the concept that defects in DNA repair pathways can accelerate the development of antibiotic resistance. The project culminated in the publication of a scientific paper, as well as hands-on lab skills in bacterial culturing, dilution plating, and mutation frequency analysis.

After graduation, Paytyn plans to pursue a master's degree in genetic counseling, combining her passion for biology with a desire to help individuals and families navigate complex genetic conditions.



"College life is a big adjustment from high school, the most important thing is finding a good work life balance. Make sure to study hard, but don't burn yourself out, and be sure to set aside time for friends and self-care. Do your absolute best and that's all you can do!"



Left: A Breast Cancer Walk/Run event that Paytyn planned through Run Club.

Above: The DNA sequence of E.coli JW2703-2 strain Paytyn found through her research.

Joseph Burke

Marywood University | BS in Biology



JT is in his third year at Marywood University where he is majoring in biology as part of the university's accelerated Pre-Physician Assistant program. In addition to his studies, JT is an active member of the Varsity Track and Field team and has also participated in several clubs and intramural sports.

Beyond athletics, JT has taken on other leadership roles on campus. He serves as a resident assistant where he was recognized as Marywood Housing and Residence Life's "Rookie of the Year" and also serves as a Health Sciences Representative for the Student Government Association. Academically, JT has consistently earned a place on the dean's list throughout his time at Marywood.

One of JT's most memorable experiences this year was a blood-typing experiment conducted in his Immunology Lab. During the project, students determined their blood types by adding anti-A, anti-B, and anti-Rh serum to blood samples. The presence of specific antigens was identified through clumping reactions, allowing students to determine their blood type firsthand while gaining practical laboratory experience.



Following the conclusion of the spring semester, JT submitted his application to Marywood's Physician Assistant Program and is awaiting news regarding a potential interview. In the meantime, he has worked as a Pharmacy Technician while completing the 500 required patient care hours for the program.

"College is definitely very different from high school. My biggest advice to high school students starting college would be to make time to work hard and make time for yourself. College can feel like a lot more responsibility at first but if you manage your time well you can succeed in the classroom, get involved, and still have fun."

Above: JT holding his "Rookie of the Year" award from Residence Life.



Right: JT and his intramural flag football team last year.

Jackson Maby

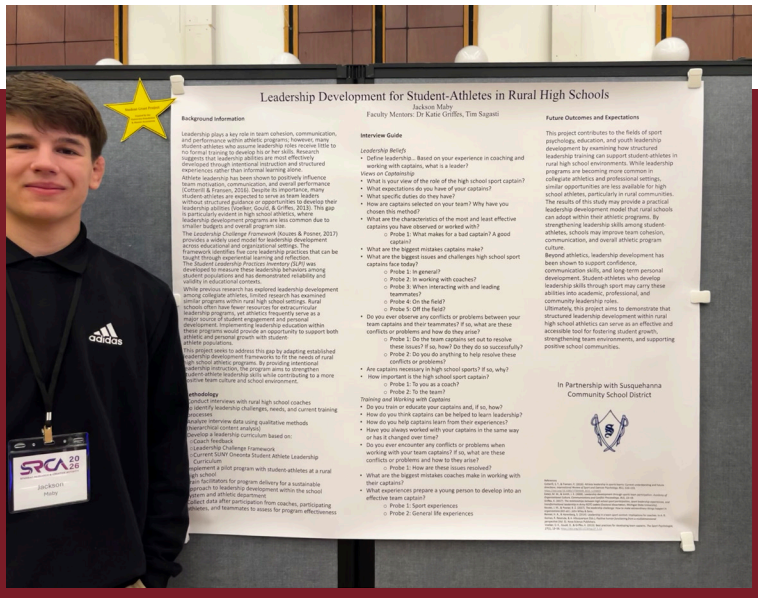
SUNY Oneonta | BS in Adolescent Education



Jack, a junior at SUNY Oneonta, is pursuing a degree in adolescent education with a concentration in mathematics. A dedicated student-athlete, he is a member of the college's wrestling team and serves as a member of the Student-Athlete Advisement Committee. He is also a team representative for Morgan's Message, an initiative that focuses on eliminating the stigma surrounding mental health within the student-athlete community. Jack is also a member of the Association of Secondary Educators and works as a tutor in the Mathematics Learning Center.

In addition to his campus involvement, Jack is engaged in a research project in partnership with the SUNY Oneonta Exercise Science Department and the Susquehanna Community School District. His group aims to develop a scalable leadership training program designed to help rural school districts equip student-athletes with effective leadership skills, with pilot testing expected to begin this fall.

Following graduation, Jack plans to pursue a master's degree in educational administration. Outside of academics, he has developed a growing passion for photography, having captured photos of nearly every athletic team on campus as well as numerous extracurricular events. This summer, he plans to further expand his portfolio by exploring a wider range of subjects and styles.



"College is very different from high school. It is most teenagers' first time being away from home for an extended period of time. My advice to those moving onto higher education is to work on your time management skills and learn how to prioritize. College will give you hundreds of opportunities to get involved in clubs, organizations, and extracurricular events, so being able to manage your time is very important. Finding a balance between classes and extracurriculars can be difficult, so it is important that you do not spread yourself too thin."

Above: Jack's presentation of his groups work on the Leadership Development Program for Student-Athletes in Rural High Schools at the SUNY Oneonta Student Research and Creative Activities Showcase this past Spring.

Lilliana Matis

Rochester Institute of Technology | BFA in Medical Illustration

Lilly, a junior at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), is pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Medical Illustration and a minor in Medical Sciences. She remains actively involved in the RIT Honors Program and the Performing Arts Scholars program.



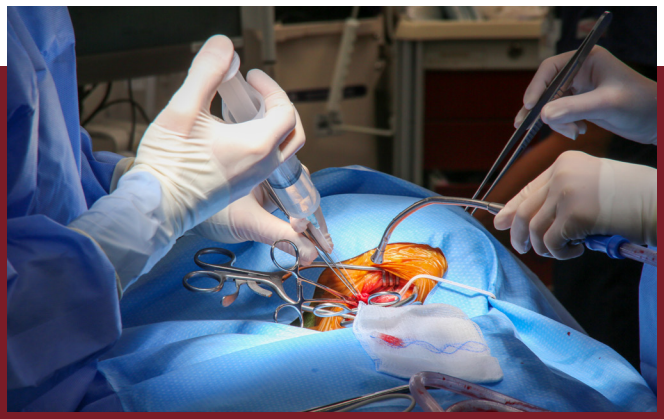
Beyond her academic and extracurricular commitments, Lilly holds several campus leadership positions. She works as a Resident Advisor, a Classroom Assistant for 2D Design, and a captain for Goodbye, Goodbuy!, a campus-wide sustainability initiative that helps reduce waste during spring move-out. Additionally, she serves on the executive boards of both Vis Viva Dance Company and the Medical Illustration Club. This year, she also stepped into the role as the Media and Marketing Coordinator for the RIT Honors Program.



Last fall, Lilly had the unique opportunity to enroll in a surgical photography course, through which she observed and photographed a variety of procedures in operating rooms at Rochester Regional Hospital. The experience provided insight into the intersection of medicine, surgery, and visual documentation, furthering her interest of art and science.

This summer, Lilly studied abroad in Florence, Italy, for ten weeks at the Santa Reparata International School of Art. She completed coursework spanning art history, marketing, and other interdisciplinary subjects while traveling throughout Italy to deepen her appreciation for the country's art, culture, and history.

"Take advantage of every opportunity life has to offer. Whether it's volunteering, joining clubs, taking dual enrollment classes, participating in extracurricular activities, or exploring new interests, the effort you invest will have a lasting impact. You will build valuable skills, discover new passions and discover new opportunities to grow. The more experiences you have now, the more prepared you will be to embrace future opportunities!"



Above: Lilly and her study abroad class in front of Michelangelo's *David*.

Right: One of Lilly's photos from a Carotid Endarterectomy procedure she saw during her Surgical Photography class.

Jeremiah Hadden

Cornell University



After taking a year's leave of absence, Jeremiah will start his freshman year at Cornell's College of Arts & Science this fall. At the college, students are encouraged to explore various fields of study in order to make an informed choice of majors.

Alexandria Hall

Rochester Institute of Technology | BS in Computer Science



Alex completed her first year at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), where she studies computer science. After taking a semester off, she looks forward to returning in the spring to continue her studies. At RIT, Alex has been actively involved on campus as a member of Computer Science House, Women in Computing (WiC), and the RIT Concert Band.

Reflecting on her transition to college, Alex advises high school students that the first few months can feel overwhelming, especially when adjusting to a new environment and building connections. Feelings of uncertainty are normal, but college is also an opportunity to learn, grow, and discover what works best for you. She found that spending time at RIT's tutoring center helped her build confidence by working through ideas with others.

Alex also encourages high school students to take advantage of Dual Enrollment courses whenever possible. The college credits she earned in high school gave her greater flexibility to focus on her core coursework once she began college.



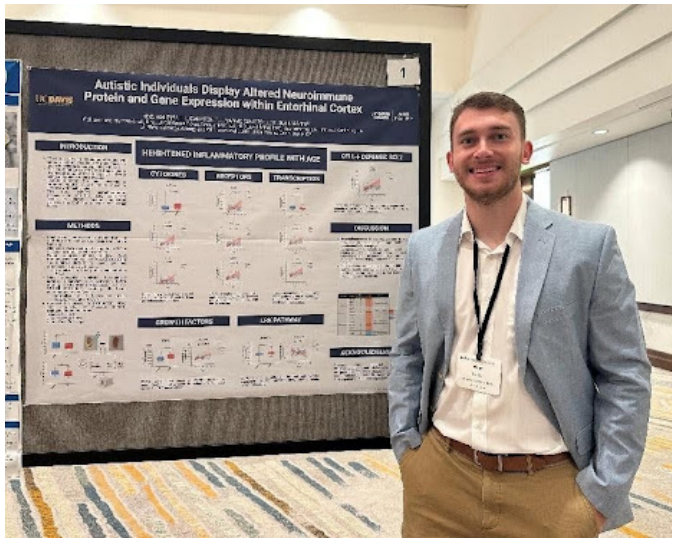
"Don't be afraid to go out there and make lots of friends. I had a friend group my first semester and we drifted apart, but because of that I was able to talk to even more people and gain even more connections I wouldn't have had before."

Above: Alex during a Concert Band performance.

Highlighted Past Scholar

Evan Haley

2017 Claire Williams O'Neil Scholar | Temple University 2021 | BS in Chemistry | University of California, Davis 2027 | PhD in Neuroscience



Susquehanna served as the stepping stone to the many opportunities which have allowed me to pursue my dream of being a neuroscientist. My desire to study neuroscience stemmed from personal reasons, but also from the incredible teachers I had during high school. Courses in chemistry, physics, and calculus at Susquehanna fueled my desire to become a scientist. Although I had a plan heading into my Senior year at SCHS, there were challenges I still needed to overcome.

When I was applying for college, my dream school was Johns Hopkins University, a prestigious university particularly in the field of neuroscience. Unfortunately, I received a rejection letter and could not enroll. This instead turned out to be a blessing in disguise. I enrolled at Temple University in Philadelphia, a place I now hold near and dear. At Temple, I became a teaching assistant in the chemistry department and a research assistant in the Neurochemistry and Cognition Lab. These positions were deeply formative experiences.

However, undergrad life at Temple was not without its challenges. Early on, I struggled with biology and ended up changing my major from premed neuroscience to chemistry. This was a difficult decision because I still wanted to be a neuroscientist, and I also found organic chemistry quite difficult the following year. However, I was determined to stick with chemistry and excel in the field—and things began to fall in place. I was able to get teaching experience in Honors Organic Chemistry Labs, several funded research opportunities through the Science Scholars Program and won a Creative Arts, Research, and Scholarship fellowship. In the end, I was able to graduate from Temple summa cum laude with an American Chemical Society-certified degree. I was also awarded the Herbert M. Winegard Memorial Award for graduating with the highest chemistry GPA.

The next step was graduate school. I wanted to pursue my PhD so I could eventually run my own research lab focused on autism research. This led to me enrolling at the University of California, Davis, a research university known for its center dedicated to studying neurodevelopmental disorders—the MIND Institute. I am now in the final year of my program, and I could not be happier with my graduate school decision. My research has taken me from San Diego and Seattle to Hawaii and Australia and soon South Africa (in addition to my study abroad program to Greece during undergrad)!

Looking ahead, I will complete my current fellowship awarded by the National Institute of Mental Health and will be teaching a clinical neuroscience course in the fall before completing my degree in Spring 2027. I intend to stay in academia and pursue my dream of running my own research lab dedicated to uncovering the cellular and molecular mechanisms involved in autism spectrum disorder and related neurodevelopmental disorders.

Reflecting on my journey, I am thankful for Susquehanna. The community support and opportunities I had at SCHS put me on a path to succeed. I hope that my journey can inspire others to pursue college and perhaps science—or simply to just follow whatever dreams they have. There are exciting opportunities out there and if you work hard, you never know where life may take you.

Career Field Trips

During the 2025–2026 academic year, the CWOF supported SCHS student field trips to DT Midstream, the Susquehanna County Career and Technology Center, the Pennsylvania Farm Show, and college campus visits to Ithaca College, Cornell University, and Binghamton University. These experiences provide students with valuable opportunities to explore potential career pathways, gain firsthand exposure to different industries, and better understand what it takes to prepare for college and future careers. These meaningful experiences are made possible through the generosity of community members who support the CWOF and invest in the future of our students.



DT Midstream

In October 2025, students in grades 9–11 from SCHS visited DT Midstream's New Milford facility for a career-connected learning experience. The students, who had expressed interest in careers in natural gas, engineering, software, and the skilled trades, were able to gain firsthand exposure to the industry and interact with professionals working in their areas of interest.



During the morning session, students engaged with DTM employees in Project Management, Safety, Gas Measurement, Pipeline Systems, and Environmental Engineering. Students then traveled to the Tingley Lake Shop, where they gained hands-on experience and insight into emissions technology, gas regulation repair, instrumentation and networking, and pressure safety valve testing. The visit provided students with a valuable understanding of the diverse career opportunities available within the energy industry and the skills needed to succeed in these fields.

Student Quotes:

"I never thought about engineering, but I really like what I learned about Environmental Engineering." — Nicholas Peet

"The hands-on group experiences were really good." — Griffin Fisk



Susquehanna County Career & Technology Center

SCSD sixth-grade students visited the Susquehanna County Career & Technology Center (SCCTC) to explore the wide range of career pathways available to them. Students toured the facility and participated in hands-on experiences in Health Care, Automotive Technology, Welding, Cosmetology, Criminal Justice, Food Management, and Carpentry. They also had the opportunity to interact with instructors and current SCCTC students, gaining firsthand insight into the skills, education, and opportunities associated with each career field.

Right: Students exploring different career pathways at SCCTC.

Pennsylvania Farm Show

Sixteen SCHS students in grades 10–12 with an interest in environmental, agricultural, and business-related fields attended the PA Farm Show to explore the wide range of career opportunities within the agriculture and environmental industries. The experience provided students with valuable exposure to professionals in these fields and opportunities to learn about potential career pathways while building their professional networks. Students were given the following assignments to complete during their visit:

- Determine how STEM drives modern agriculture.
- Visit an agricultural business and explain how STEM is involved.
- Attend a career expo held at the complex.
- Explore a champion animal and determine what qualities make it a champion.
- Locate a government agency and determine what jobs and careers are available.
- Visit an environmental agency to learn what issues are being addressed and what careers are available in this field.

Students then prepared a presentation to share what they learned with classmates who did not take the trip.

Student Feedback:

"I got a lot of information on how businesses start and why. I asked questions about how they continue working on a farm if the money is not coming and many of them had a similar response. Because they love the drive of working on what they own because what they have they own. A lot of the farmers I talked to told me that it is not the money that keeps them going; it's the generational feeling they get when they look out of their window."

"I didn't know how many jobs were available in agriculture, ranging from the science field to business."





Above: Students at the Pennsylvania Farm Show.

College Campus Tours

Students in grades 10–12 from SCHS visited Ithaca College, Cornell University, and Binghamton University, where they participated in guided tours and informational sessions designed to introduce them to the college experience. For many of these students, this was their first opportunity to step onto a college campus and experience firsthand what college life and learning environments look like.





The visits exposed students to a variety of college settings and helped them begin identifying what they value in a college or university. Students were able to compare campuses, consider what they liked and did not like, and gain a better understanding of the opportunities available to them after high school. Most importantly, the experience provided students with a starting point as they begin researching and planning for their postsecondary education and future careers.

Student Quotes:

"Thank you for allowing us this opportunity to explore these college campuses. I believe that this is a great opportunity for students that haven't picked a college yet or are stuck between two or three colleges. We get to see what the colleges look like and ask any questions we have about them. This will help us decide what college we will go to after our high school career. Without your help, we would have to go to college with a large amount of uncertainty. These trips help get rid of most of this uncertainty and will help us to feel safe when we go there. Thank you again for your help." — Jasmine Bills (Grade 10)

"Thanks to the O'Neill Foundation for providing such a wonderful experience. Gaining the knowledge and getting a head start on discovering my future is something I value greatly. I had a great time, thank you!" — Colin Herschel (Grade 10)

"Thank you so much for this opportunity to go on this trip. It was incredibly informative, and I found out about things I wouldn't have been able to do online. Being able to meet our tour guides in person and ask them questions face-to-face was extremely helpful, and showed me that college is a welcoming environment. These trips are important because we had human connection and the ability to see what the setting is like with our own eyes. I was able to tell which colleges would have the most walking, be the most overwhelming, have more people, etc. I appreciate this opportunity, and I hope many students in the future can have this as well." — Samantha Madigan (Grade 10)

Above: Students visiting Binghamton University.

Partnerships

We are delighted to continue our strong partnerships with DT Midstream, Honesdale National Bank (HNB), and the Susquehanna County Arts, Education and Healthy Community Fund. These partnerships are making important contributions to the Susquehanna community.

DT Midstream

DT Midstream has been an important part of the Susquehanna County community since 2012 and a valued local employer. In 2015, DT Midstream partnered with the Foundation to establish a scholarship program for Susquehanna Community High School students pursuing careers in business and technology. Since then, DT Midstream has awarded more than $100,000 in scholarships.

DT Midstream's commitment extends well beyond scholarships. The company actively supports Susquehanna Community School District students through annual career field trips, donations of digital equipment, mock interviews, and career-day presentations—giving students valuable opportunities to explore careers and connect classroom learning with the real world.

"DT Midstream has been a partner that, year after year, goes out of its way to help our students."
— Richard Emmons, SCHS Principal



Honesdale National Bank Brings Financial Literacy to the Classroom

Since 2018, Honesdale National Bank has partnered with Susquehanna Community School District to provide students with practical financial literacy skills. The program covers banking, credit, investing, student loans, mortgages, and retirement planning through hands-on activities and presentations from HNB professionals.

This year, Ted Radu and Caden Slifko visited the Economics class to discuss investing, including stocks, mutual funds, bonds, cryptocurrency, and emerging trends in artificial intelligence and NFTs. They also covered budgeting, saving, retirement planning, IRAs, 401(k)s, diversification, and asset allocation.



"The presentation gave students an opportunity to connect classroom concepts with real-world financial decisions. We are very grateful to Honesdale National Bank for investing its time and expertise in our students and helping them develop financial knowledge they can carry throughout their lives. The students benefited tremendously from the experience."
— Robert Goodrich, SCHS Economics teacher

Susquehanna County Art, Education and Healthy Community Fund

Since 2021, this fund has made annual grants of $5,000 for projects nominated by SCHS leadership. The School has used these funds for such purposes as upgrading lighting in the auditorium and purchasing new instruments for the School band. Both the School and the CWOF are grateful for this continuous support.

Scholars Giving Back

One of the Foundation's key objectives is to support Susquehanna's youth through initiatives that benefit students and the school community. Our former scholars are always finding meaningful ways to support today's students, including returning to SCHS to share their college experiences, serving as mentors, tutoring students in mathematics, and providing hands-on medical experience for students interested in healthcare. Their willingness to share their knowledge and experience is making a real difference for the next generation of students.

Claire Williams O'Neil Foundation Assembly

On December 22, SCHS held their annual Claire Williams O'Neil Scholarship assemblies for students in grades 9-12. The program brought back past scholarship recipients to share their experiences with current students and provide insights on college and careers beyond high school. The scholars discussed the Claire Williams O'Neil Scholarship and covered a variety of topics including career exploration, the college application process, resources available to students while in high school, and the importance of community service.

Students were then divided into smaller groups, allowing them to interact directly with the scholars and learn from their personal experiences. This exposed students to the wide range of colleges, careers, and experiences that will be available to them after graduation and helps them understand that the effort and the choices they make during high school will decide what opportunities will be open to them in the future. The annual assemblies are a key part of the Foundation's efforts to connect current students with former scholars and make them aware of the Claire Williams O'Neil Scholarship.

College Application Process

During the past school year, students had a rare chance to attend a college application workshop led by Emily Staros, a SCHS graduate and past CWOF scholar now working at Cornell University. Emily provided attendees with insights into the college application process, the components of a strong application, and how college admissions officers make admissions decisions.

Students were put into smaller groups acting as "Admissions Committees," where they were able to review sample college applications and made their own decisions on accepting or denying candidates. This hands-on experience gave students an inside perspective on the college admissions process and a solid understanding of what colleges look for in prospective students.

Mentorship

In partnership with the SCHS staff, the Foundation supports the school's Project Jump Start Program. A key component of this program is providing students with mentors who can offer guidance, encouragement, and support as they explore career and college choices. The Foundation would like to thank all the SCHS alumni, including several past Claire Williams O'Neil Foundation scholars, for volunteering their time and sharing their experience as mentors.

Newsletter

Finally, the Foundation Board would like to express appreciation to Lilly Matis, a Claire Williams O'Neil Foundation scholar, for her help in compiling this year's newsletter. Lilly generously volunteered to become a member of the newsletter staff and has formatted and designed this year's publication. We are grateful to her for using her artistic talent to support our work.

Project Jump Start

This program, established in 2022 by former SCHS Principal Brent Soden, has grown and evolved into one of the most important ways our Foundation supports the School. We are active members of the PJS Steering Committee and provide funding for field trips, supplemental math tutoring, and SAT preparation.

Since its inception, twelve mentor-mentee partnerships have been completed or are currently underway, with another group of mentees expected to join the program this fall. The CWOF is grateful to all those who volunteer as mentors, including many of our former CWOF scholars.

Over the past three years, we have gained valuable experience. We have seen notable successes, while also identifying areas where the program can be strengthened. We are learning what works—and what does not—and using those lessons to continually improve the program.

Our most successful mentees appear to share several characteristics. They gain exposure to the world beyond the School during their high school years; take a disciplined approach to exploring potential careers and college majors; begin building a strong academic and extracurricular record as early as middle school; narrow their career and college-major choices by the final semester before graduation; and take the time to visit their leading college choices.

Project Jump Start is now being redesigned to help students follow this approach. CWOF Board Associates, working closely with SCHS faculty champions and the Guidance Counselor's Office, have revamped the selection process to identify middle-school students who:

- Are nominated by the School based on their academic performance and character.
- Demonstrate ambition and drive and are prepared to prioritize academics throughout high school.
- Aspire to attend highly selective universities.
- Are prepared to work closely with a mentor and are receptive to advice and guidance.
- Understand the importance of SAT testing and are willing to put in the additional effort, both inside and outside the classroom, to improve their scores.
- Have strong parental or other adult support.

The CWOF would also like to recognize the tremendous work of Board Associates Melissa Kukowski and Emily Staros. Their energy, commitment, and devotion are essential to the success of Project Jump Start. We also thank Principal Rich Emmons for his leadership, Guidance Counselor Bridget Milos for her support, and the SCHS faculty champions for their continued participation in PJS.

STEM 2030 in Action: Preparing Future-Ready Learners

Over the past year, Susquehanna Community School District has continued to progress toward its STEM 2030 vision: preparing students for future success through strengthened academics, hands-on learning experiences, career-connected exposure, and the development of the skills needed for success in the modern workforce.

STEM 2030 is about more than science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. It is a district-wide effort from Pre-K to 12 to develop students who have critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills on top of a strong academic foundation.

Throughout the year, students engaged in STEM experiences both inside and outside the classroom. Elementary students explored the engineering design process through activities such as building bridges, testing aluminum foil boats, creating lunar landers, and constructing structures using various materials. A highlight of the year was STEM Carnival Night, where students showcased their creations and engineering skills with families and community members.



Students also developed technology and coding skills through programs such as Tinkercad and Code.org that allow them to design 3D models and learn coding concepts. Beyond the classroom, students participated in STEM clubs, the NEPA Girls in STEM Competition, and Girls in STEM Day at Johnson College. Through these experiences, they gained exposure to technical careers and real-world applications of STEM learning.

The district has also expanded its academic offerings. Beginning next year, Honors Algebra I will be offered in Grade 8 to provide earlier access to advanced mathematics. This will open pathways to higher-level STEM coursework. Additionally, Honors Biology will be offered in Grade 10, which will allow more rigorous instruction in science.

Additional adjustments to the high school science sequence will prepare students to better prepare them for the Keystone Exam. Most students will now take Chemistry in Grade 10 before Biology in Grade 11. This will help them develop stronger scientific reasoning and laboratory skills. Dual Enrollment Chemistry will remain available for students seeking advanced coursework.



These academic enhancements and STEM experiences will be crucial in helping students become effective communicators, critical thinkers, collaborators, and lifelong learners. As the SCSD continues to implement STEM 2030, our Foundation continues to offer its support for this important initiative.

Above: Students learning valuable STEM skills.

Left: Students hearing from past SCHS graduates about STEM related careers.



THE
CLAIRE WILLIAMS O'NEIL
FOUNDATION

Dedicated to expanding educational opportunities for Susquehanna area youth.

Donations

The Foundation is grateful to all those who have contributed to our work in the past and continue to do so. Your donations allow the students of Susquehanna Community High School to participate in programs beyond the standard high school curriculum and use technical equipment that is cutting edge.

Please send contributions to the Claire Williams O'Neil Foundation to:
Claire Williams O'Neil Foundation
Michael Flanagan, Treasurer
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Washington, DC 2007