



# Meridian CUSD Newsletter

## Fall 2017

OUR COMMUNITY, OUR SCHOOL, OUR STORY

## A Word From Our Superintendent

By Dr. P.J. Caposey



Meridian Community and Families,

While many of you may not like receiving this letter as it signifies the unofficial end of summer – it is universally one of my favorite days of the year. I typically sit down to write this around August 1<sup>st</sup> and it means that school is almost back in session. While summer is wonderful and

the calmed pace is refreshing – I LOVE the school year. The summer months are important for schools as we analyze our data, make facility improvements, and plan for the upcoming year. The summer months serve as the practice before the game or show. This letter means that the preparation is drawing to a close and we are ready to embark on another adventure of a year.

The past fifteen months have been very good to our district. We were able to undertake a massive facility improvement project last summer and finished some smaller projects this summer, including ALL new lockers at the high school. Additionally, we were able to purchase 25 classroom computer carts. This means we added over 800 computers to our district and we finally have the infrastructure to support our students entering into a more digital schooling environment. Our test scores remained competitive overall, but outstanding at the high school. The high school scored in the 94<sup>th</sup> percentile of all schools in the state on the most recently released standardized assessment data. Additionally, they were one of 20 schools nation-wide to be labeled a School of Opportunity and also were recognized as a Silver Award winner by US News and World Report. We have continued to move in the right direction financially

and have worked to repair some of the damage caused by the financial crisis of five years ago.

Each year in this letter I share what our district focus for the year will be. This year is simply – growth. The choice for the theme was easy for me this year. It is easy to become stagnated after a massive amount of change in a short period of time or when coming through a crisis. This will not be us. Greatness is a choice and this is a challenge I hope we accept as a district. Below is an excerpt from my welcome back letter to staff – I hope it carries us through and helps drive our action this year.

*The really successful – great- teachers know focusing on personal and professional growth when times get hard is difficult, but they continue to invest in their own growth anyway. If you want to be great – stay unfinished. Invest in yourself. Read. Connect online. Observe others. Ask questions. Allow yourself to be vulnerable and open to new ideas. You deserve it! Our kids deserve it!*

As always thank you for your continued support. It is not lost on me how lucky we are as a faculty, staff, and administration to serve this community. Also, please continue to connect with us on our social media platforms. We work very hard to attempt to meet our parents and students where they already are – so we hope to see you on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Please label school related posts with #WeAreMCUSD so we can collaboratively celebrate the great things happening in our community.

Welcome to the 2017-2018 school-year!

Thank you, and let's make it a great year,

## Meridian Receives New Driver's Ed Car

Students in Meridian 223 will be learning how to drive in an impressive new vehicle. Students will be driving a new Chevy Malibu as they learn the rules of the road. Meridian is thankful for partner Angler Motors from Loves Park. As a result of their partnership the new vehicle came at no direct expense to the district. Board President John Smith noted, "Any time we can improve the service we provide to our students or the resources our students use to learn without creating an additional burden on the budget or taxpayers – that is a win-win." The vehicle is already in the district and will be used immediately upon school starting in August.



## Illinois Teacher of the Year finalists selected

*2018 Illinois Teacher of the Year to be named Oct. 28*

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) today announced the 10 finalists for the 2018 Illinois Teacher of the Year. ISBE will name one individual from the 10 finalists as the 2018 Illinois Teacher of the Year during the "Those Who Excel" banquet in October. The state's annual educator recognition banquet and program will acknowledge the contributions and accomplishments of more than 230 educators and school personnel from throughout the state.

"The Those Who Excel program honors and celebrates some of Illinois' most exemplary teachers at every level," said State Superintendent of Education Tony Smith, Ph.D. "Every student deserves to feel like they belong. Our 10 Teacher of the Year finalists are outstanding representatives of educators who continuously go above and beyond to make students feel well known and well cared for. Their level of commitment, their passion, and their dedication is evident in their strong relationships with students, colleagues, and families within their communities."

A selection committee composed of administrators, teachers, educational service personnel, student support personnel, and past Illinois Teacher of the Year winners reviewed 234 Teacher of the Year nominations this year.

Ricardo "Ricky" Castro is the 2017 Illinois Teacher of the Year. Ricky teaches English as a second language, language arts, and Spanish at Elk Grove High School in Township High School District 214.

"Through my experiences as the Illinois Teacher of the Year, it has become more evident to me that teachers today are daily leaders that foster the social development, self-actualization, and academic growth needed to thrive in our diverse and democratic society," Castro said. "It has been such a great opportunity to honor and recognize teachers as they provide a daily example of what it means to serve others in one of the most life-changing professions any individual could ever join."

ISBE will announce the 2018 Illinois Teacher of the Year during the Those Who Excel banquet on Saturday, Oct. 28, at the Bloomington-Normal Marriott Hotel and Conference Center in Normal. The Teacher of the Year will represent Illinois at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Space Camp in Huntsville, Ala., and in the Council of Chief State School Officers' National Teacher of the Year Program.

Here are this year's finalists:

**Valarie Berger** teaches family and consumer sciences at West Leyden High School, located in Franklin Park, in Leyden High School District 212.

**James Connelly** is an industrial technology teacher at Morton West High School, located in Berwyn, in J. Sterling Morton High School District 201.



**Teresa Eden** is a Title 1 reading teacher at Monroe Center Grade School, located in Monroe Center, in Meridian Community Unit School District 223.

**William Farmer** teaches biology and chemistry at Evanston Township High School, located in Evanston, in District 202.

**Lindsey Jensen** teaches English at Dwight Township High School, located in Dwight, in Dwight Public Schools District 230.

**Erin Miller** is a fourth-grade teacher in a self-contained classroom at Brimfield Grade School, located in Brimfield, in Brimfield Unit District 309.

**Jamie Nash-Mayberry** teaches social studies at Shawnee High School, located in Wolf Lake, in Shawnee Community Unit School District 84.

**Angie Noble** is a third-grade teacher at Jerseyville East Elementary School, located in Jerseyville, in Jersey Community Unit School District 100.

**Faith Skinner** teaches math in sixth grade at Emily G. Johns School, located in Plano, in Plano Community Unit School District 88.

**Morgan Teske** is a special education teacher in grades 9-12 at East High School, located in Rockford, in Rockford Public School District 205.

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## WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

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### Highland School

Hello from all at Highland Elementary School. We are so very excited about the excitement, engagement, and learning that will happen during the 2017/2018 school year. All of the staff at Highland Elementary is excited to partner with our parents and community in our students' learning. We will continue to share materials and website resources for you to use at home with your child to go hand in hand with the instruction taking place at Highland.

With the new school year come new faces, both in our students and in our staff. First, we want to welcome all of the new students and families who are coming to Highland Elementary School for the first time. We also want to welcome Mrs. Jenna Taseff, Mrs. Tara Jepsen, and Mrs. Abbey Leathermon. Each will be teaching First Grade this year. We are excited for the great things that will transpire within each of their classes throughout this school year. Mr. Mullikin will also be joining us as the Assistant Principal as he transitions into the Principal position as I retire at the end of this school year.

One of our goals this year is to further build the important partnerships necessary to support our students in their learning. We will be working on creating a Principal-Parent Advisory Council (PPAC) which will be led by Mr. Mullikin. I would also encourage you to partner with us in the development of academic, behavioral and citizenship skills for each of your students. A great start to this process is to review the school handbook with your student. Going over our school handbook in detail will help you to know exactly what is valued and reinforced at Highland. The handbook is posted under Highland News on the District Website at [Meridian223.org](http://Meridian223.org). Important dates are listed in the handbook and on the Calendar page.

It was a great pleasure to see so many of our parents and students at Open House on August 15<sup>th</sup>. Most parents and guardians signed up for conferences and volunteer opportunities. If you did not sign up for conferences, please call the office to schedule an appointment. Conferences are October 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. Please refer to the website and handbook for important dates this school year.

We have an excellent partnership and a very active PTO that raises funds for Highland and Monroe Center. The PTO provides lots of fun opportunities for students and families throughout the year. There are many opportunities to volunteer all throughout the school year. You will be receiving a PTO newsletter outlining their events, fundraising, and purchases early in the school year. Please volunteer where you can and help support the PTO efforts in raising funds for additional supplies and programs in our schools.

It is a joy to watch the children grow continually all through the year and to see the great pride the teachers and staff take in working with our students. I am proud of our school community and thank you for your partnership of our students, teachers, staff, and educational programs. Thank you for your commitment to our schools for your children. Let's have a great year.

Sincerely,

**Mike Coulahan, Principal**

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## WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

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### Monroe Center School

Hopefully everyone enjoyed their summer vacations and are getting back into the swing of things here at school. Everyone at Monroe Center is very excited to be rolling in the 2017-2018 school year!

As we progress through the school year, don't hesitate to contact your son or daughter's teacher if you have any questions. You can always contact the main office as well. Faculty, staff, and custodians have recently been trained in Leader in Me! We are all eager to begin utilizing what we learned in our classrooms and building. We think the kids are going to love learning about this program and utilizing it in their everyday lives.

Teachers and staff will be focusing on the following School Improvement Goals:

By the end of 2017-2018 school year, 50% of Monroe Center students will meet their individual goals in STAR and Math Pre/Post assessments.

By the end of 2017-2018 school year, 75% of teachers will have met their end of the year goal.

Below you will find important dates to be aware of as we begin our new school year..

SIP Day – Early release on Friday, September 1 @ 11:10 am

No school on September 4th due to Labor Day.

Parent/Teacher conferences will be October 4 from 4-7 pm and October 11 from 3-6.

No school Friday, October 6 due to a full day Teacher's Institute

No school Monday, October 9 due to Columbus Day.

**Don't forget – Follow Mrs. Hogan on Twitter at @MCPrincipal815. Also, be sure to check out the District's FB page for updates and pictures on what is happening at MC and around the District.**

I'm looking forward to a very successful 2017-2018 school year!

**Sarah Hogan – Principal**

## WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

### Meridian Junior High

Welcome to the 2017-2018 school year! We are so excited to welcome all of our students and staff back for another exciting year! This year our focus will be on 'growth'. Growth of our students academically and emotionally; growth of our staff through setting a clear vision for our future; and growth of our families through continuing our PTO events and parent nights.

Parents are encouraged to partner with us to encourage and help us grow our students. Your involvement is essential for the success of your student. One way you can stay connected is to read our weekly newsletter so appropriately named "In Case Your Student Didn't Tell You". This newsletter will arrive in your email inbox every Sunday at 4:00 p.m. Please make sure we have your correct email address!

The MJHS PTO also supports the growth of our students, staff and families. The PTO has raised over \$40,000 since its inception in 2014. The PTO raises money through many different activities such as the Back to School Bash, student rec nights, and the Holiday Vendor Fair. Some of the items donated to MJHS by the PTO include: the 6th grade welcome kits, bottle filler water fountains, PBIS gift cards, classroom supplies and computers! Our new computer lab was supported by the PTO! Please consider becoming an active member by emailing your interest to [meridianjrhighpto@gmail.com](mailto:meridianjrhighpto@gmail.com).

### Important Information and Upcoming Dates

The Junior High office is open from 7:30-4:00.

September 1 .....Early Release 11:10  
 September 4 .....No School Labor Day  
 September 13 .....Parent/Teacher Conferences 4:00-7:00  
 September 19 .....Parent/Teacher Conferences 4:00-7:00  
 October 6 .....Teacher Institute  
 October 9 .....No School Columbus Day

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## WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

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### Stillman Valley High School

Dear SVHS Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to the 2017-2018 School Year; we are excited to begin a new year with all of you. Stillman Valley High School's Vision is to create a learning environment that empowers our students to take on the most challenging courses offered in an effort to prepare them for success at the college, career, or military level. We truly want our students to be **Empowered to Excel**. However, this vision cannot be attained without valuing and promoting social and emotional wellness. Over the course of this year our students, parents, faculty, staff, and administration will work together to envision and create a positive learning environment focused on social and emotional wellness.

Thank you for continuing to partner with us to positively impact the academic, social, and emotional growth of our students every day. Please know that your involvement and support of your children at the high school level is essential. Students still need to see that you play an active role in their high school endeavors. You can stay connected by making consistent use of our SVHS website at [www.stillmanvalley-high.org](http://www.stillmanvalley-high.org). The **SVHS Daily Announcements**, **SVHS Parent-Student Handbook**, **SAT/ACT Test Prep**, **Family Access/Gradebook**, **SVHS Course Guide**, and much more are available under the **Quick Links** tab on the high school website.

Students at SVHS are encouraged to earn Community Service Hours throughout their high school careers. A mindset of service supports our District Mission Statement to cultivate "...community contributors." Our seniors are recognized for their four years of service during their graduation ceremony. Service hours should be completed by students outside the school day through various local organizations. Our students can also earn service hours in conjunction with SVHS clubs, teams, or classes. Each time your child completes service hours, please encourage him or her to stop by our Counseling Department to complete a one-page **Online Service Hours Form**, or they can complete the form on-line by visiting the **Quick Links** tab on our SVHS website at [www.stillmanvalleyhigh.org](http://www.stillmanvalleyhigh.org). Our SVHS Counseling Department would be happy to provide students with options and contact information for service opportunities.

The Latin Honors Program at SVHS was established several years ago, and it serves to promote our District Mission and SVHS Vision. High school seniors can earn Latin Honors recognition upon graduation by meeting several criteria related to: ACT or SAT Benchmark Scores, Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA), Good Citizenship, and multiple Capstone or College-Level Courses. With our state's ever-changing high-stakes testing, it is necessary that we define what it means to be College/Career/Military ready at our local level. The specific requirements of Latin Honors can be found on page 5 of your child's SVHS Agenda/Planner and under the **Quick Links** tab in the **2017-2018 Parent-Student Handbook** on our SVHS webpage.

## News and Notes from Transportation

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- \* As a reminder, our goal is to have safe and timely pick-ups and drop-offs of all students. We ask for a window of five-minutes early and five-minutes late bordering the shared pick-up and drop-off time. Please contact the Transportation Department if pick-ups or drop-offs do not occur within that window.
- \* Davis Junction students (particularly Ogle Crossings and Harvest Glenn students and parents) - Please keep in mind that it will be approximately 8 minutes for a bus to go around a different direction to get into your subdivisions to start the pick up or drop off process when stopped by a train. We thank you for your patience with this, as you know all too well how much of an inconvenience these trains can be.
- \* If your student will be going home with another student after school, please be sure to write a note to inform the bus driver. This will be permitted as long as the space on the bus allows.
- \* Although we are still enjoying the beautiful weather, winter will be here before we know it. Please keep in mind with the winter driving season that our driver's first priority is your student's safety in getting to and from school and school activities. When the roads appear to be a little tricky to navigate know that your driver is doing their best to be on time, but taking all the necessary precautions to arrive safely.
- \* MCUSD is still welcoming applicants who would like to join our team. The district provides all necessary training. Join us in this very rewarding part-time job.

*continued from page 6*

### Important Dates – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter:

August 1 .....	First Full Day of Student Attendance
August 18 .....	SVHS Cardinal Night at 5:30 PM (All Fall Teams/Clubs - Begin on SVHS Football Field)
August 22 .....	SVHS Back-to-School Night at 6:00 PM (Multi-Purpose Room)
September 1 .....	Early Release for Students at 11:10 AM
September 4 .....	Labor Day – No School
October 6 .....	Teachers' Institute – No School
October 7 .....	Homecoming Dance 7:30 – 10:30 PM at SVHS M.P. Room
October 9 .....	Columbus Day – No School
October 11 & 18 .....	SVHS Parent-Teacher Conferences 4:00 – 7:00 PM

At Stillman Valley High School, we are extremely excited to start the fall sports seasons with a newly painted gym floor. We are thankful for the partnership between the Meridian District and the Meridian Athletic Booster Club for financially supporting this project.

Activity/Athletic Website: <http://8to18.com/stillmanvalley> or download the 8to18 app from the App Store.

Sincerely,

**Mrs. Leslie Showers**  
Principal



## Local Postal Customer

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### SVHS Activities and Athletics

#### STILLMAN VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL EARNS SILVER MEDAL FROM U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT'S 2017 BEST HIGH SCHOOLS



Stillman Valley High School Principal, Mrs. Leslie Showers, is pleased to announce that Stillman Valley High School has earned the 'Silver Medal' Recognition from *US News and World Report*, in their search for

America's Top High Schools. The Best High School rankings identify the country's top-performing public high schools. The goal is to provide a clear, unbiased picture of how well public high schools serve all of their students – from the highest to lowest achieving – in preparing them to demonstrate proficiency in basic skills as well as readiness for college-level work. There are a number of data sources used to produce the Best High Schools rankings:

- **The Common Core of Data** is the U.S. Department of Education's website, updated annually, that contains basic data on enrollment, student ethnicity, and other profile information on all public high schools in the U.S. The U.S. Department of Education collects the data found on this site directly from the schools themselves, school districts, or state departments of education.

- **College Board** serves as the source of **Advanced Placement Exam data** for each public high school. When applicable, A.P. Exam data is used to create calculated values used in the rankings.

- Each high school's **statewide accountability proficiency test results** and **graduation rate** were collected directly from official sources in each state. The statewide assessment data are from the 2014-2015 school year and the graduation rates correspond to the 2015 graduation cohort, which is made up of students who entered ninth grade in 2011-2012.

SVHS is the top ranked high school in Lee, Ogle, Winnebago, and Boone Counties. This recognition is the second national award of the year for Stillman; SVHS was also named a School of Opportunity, an award focusing on serving the whole child, which looks beyond test scores. You can read more about both awards, using the links below.

<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/illinois/districts/meridian-cusd-223/stillman-valley-high-school-6859>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2016/09/12/the-20-schools-that-won-2016-schools-of-opportunity-awards-and-why-they-were-selected/>

