

FRUITPORT Area News

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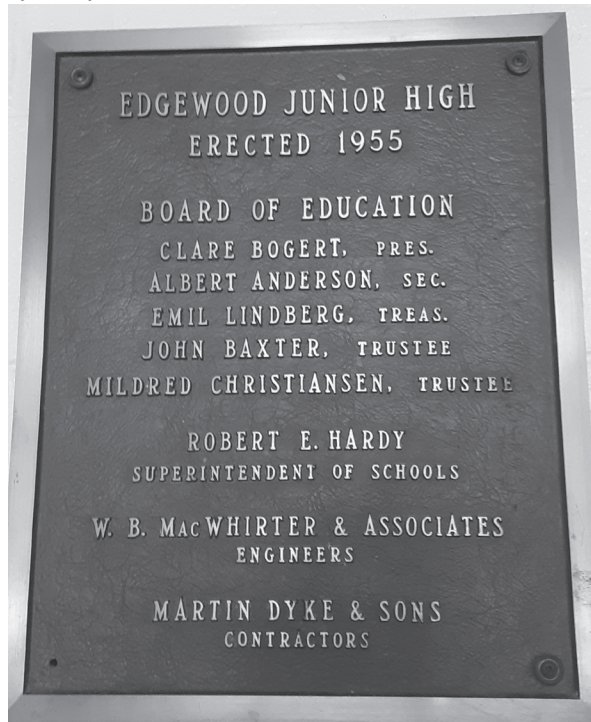
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Save our Library Vote YES!

For reasons why, see pages 17, 18 & 19

Fruitport's New High School Project

by Larry J. Pellet



Anticipation and expectations are running high in the Fruitport district as construction of a state-of-the-art high school is well underway. Utilizing a well thought through development plan which emphasizes fiscal responsibility, safety and modern technology, the new renovations are already moving students into new and better surroundings, and will continue to do so incrementally until completion, which is slated for 2021.

Due to a "tremendous group effort", according to a proud, but modest Superintendant Bob Symoniak, "the high school will be the flagship for the district." Citing eventual infrastructure failure, Symoniak says the original portion of the old H.S., built in the 1950's, will be torn down, while additions built in 1998 will remain to save on costs.

What began as a failed millage attempt in 2009, developed into a smarter, leaner plan by the facilities committee in 2013 to observe, inspect and brainstorm ideas involving Fruitport's own existing school buildings, and then surrounding school districts as to how a gemstone of a high school could be brought forth. After a 2016 48.7M millage was approved by voters, construction began March 26th 2018.

It was the first significant bond proposal for major construction that had passed in 50 years, and will help to bring Fruitport up to date with most other school districts in West Michigan. With the additional millage, Fruitport still ranks low in millage revenue, a fact that Symoniak is quite please with. Throwing praise, he glowed about the Fruitport alumni that were instrumental with the project. "Dave Hazekamp's (Board President) leadership is the best I've ever seen", he stated, while adding "Lauren Chesney (FHS Principal) has presented a flawless transition thus far, and John Winkas (FHS Operations Director) has shown unbelievable knowledge of operations that has been priceless."

"People with babies are already moving into the

district because of the new school."

Priority on the new building will be placed on STEM, an acronym for science, technology, engineering and math. Robotics, arts and a design for flexible learning styles will also be incorporated



into the college-like learning environment. The new auditorium will be the "showpiece of West Michigan", he stated unequivocally with a happy smile.

"Students AND parents are excited about project", he observed, which includes plans for reduced traffic along Pontaluna, increased

gymnasium space, and a new age wall structure designed to both thwart off unwanted visitors from a modern day society, while allowing for future building add-ons. Like a proud papa, the personable superintendant added, "Thank you on behalf of the kids and staff...for giving us this opportunity."

Freshman Rylee Palmer, whose classmates will



be the first to graduate from the new facility, says she and her friends are juiced and "ready for it to be built!"

"With air-conditioning of course", she sheepishly demanded.

Police Vet's Daughter Awarded Law Enforcement Scholarship



FRUITPORT, MI — Fruitport High School graduate Sydney Bleich has been awarded a \$2,000 Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP) Dream Scholarship. She is among eight top students who will receive the award to encourage their pursuit of law enforcement/public safety careers by the professional public safety officers of LEEP.

Bleich, who graduated with a 3.4 GPA, is entering a five-year dual bachelor's degree program at Saint Mary's College and University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. She will pursue a bachelor's in Applied Mathematics at Saint Mary's and a Computer Engineering Bachelor's at Notre Dame. "It's part of the STEM program," said Rick Bleich, her father and retired Police Officers Labor Council (POLC) Executive Committee Chairman. "Saint Mary's is an all girls college and what they wanted to do is to get more women involved in the CAM (computer and applied mathematics) field ... that's primarily male-dominated. They have special study groups because of the high

number of credit hours."

"I hope to receive this scholarship to pursue my dream and follow my family's legacy in law enforcement," said Sydney Bleich. Rick Bleich is a Muskegon Police Department veteran. "After college, I plan to apply to the FBI Academy in the computer forensics program. I plan to go into the field of Cyber Security, where I would aid in solving Cyber Security crimes in the workplace."

As Robotics Team Lead Programmer and Presenter through Industrial Studio at Fruitport High, Bleich taught younger children about programming and the basics of Cyber Security. "She has attended job shadows, conferences and even created her own website on her own accord to help students in the area of Internet security," wrote Kathleen Kay Steudle-Schwander, Fruitport High Industrial Technology Teacher. "What has impressed me most is watching Sydney strengthen herself in struggling areas. She challenges herself to increase her comfort zone and doesn't stop until she has mastered them. Over the years I have seen her become a leader in our class work through a combination of her motivation to do well, and her love of hands on application."

She was a member of her high school Equestrian Team, Spanish Club and Choir. She was 4-H Vice President and Secretary and involved in a Horse Judging Team. As Vice President and Chairperson of Leo Club, Bleich volunteered building ramps for the disabled, organizing community carnivals and parades. "The Leo Club has taught me to become a stronger leader," she wrote in her application.

Other scholarship winners include: Esperanza Razo of California; Ryan McIntyre of Indiana; Hunter Bowerson, Mason Deible and Marybeth Gormley of Michigan; Colby Matthys of Missouri and Antronette Gholston of Oklahoma. In its 14th year, LEEP has awarded some \$232,000 in Dream scholarships to students showing a demonstrated interest in public service/law enforcement careers.

Visit www.leepusa.com for more information about LEEP programs.