

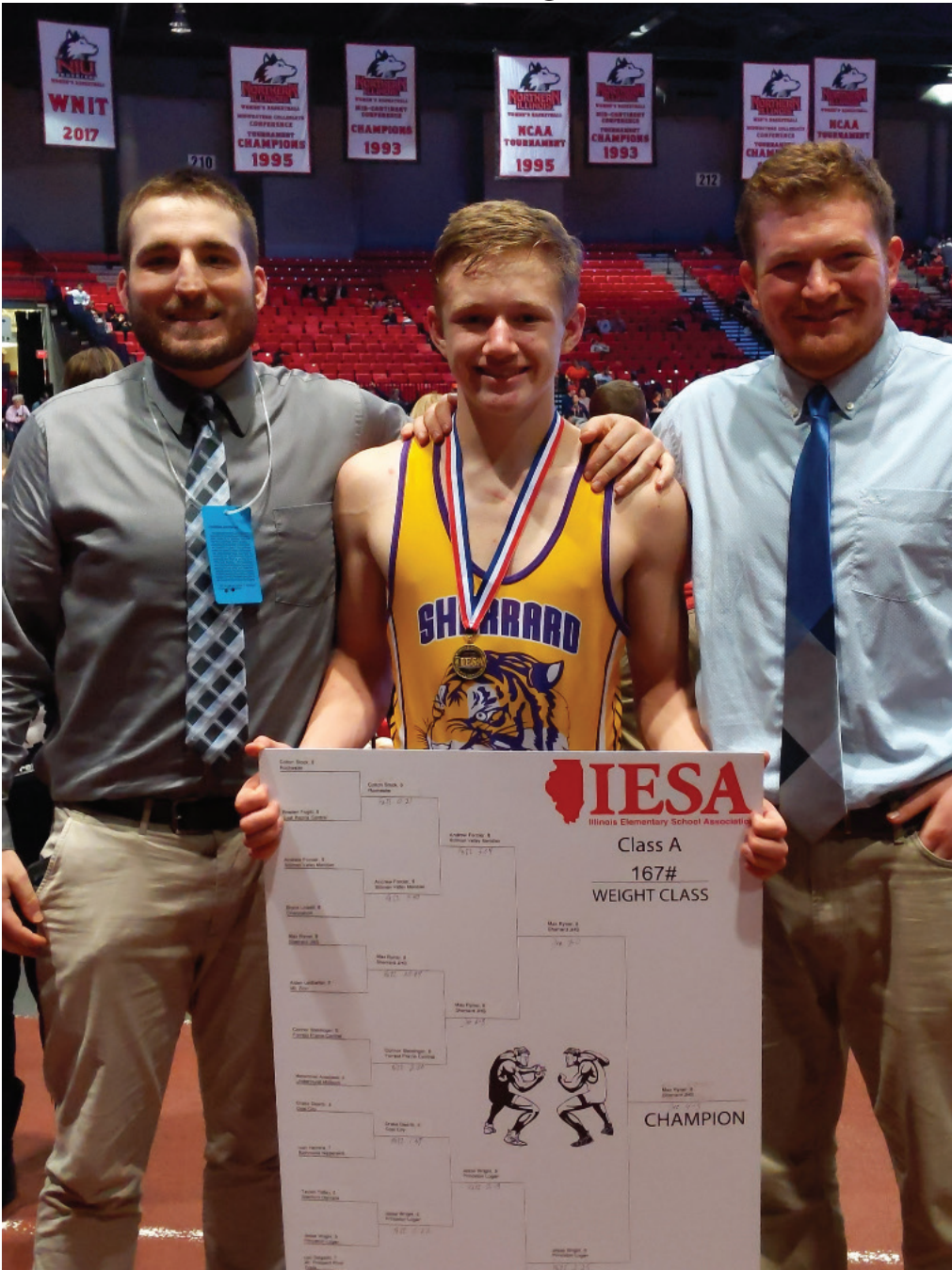


Have you seen our new district website?
www.sherrard.us

Upcoming Events

April 1 - Jr. High Spring Meet The Teams, 5:30 p.m.
Gym 3, Jr. High Track;
Winola Elementary Family Fun Night 5:30-6:30 p.m.
April 6 - Post Prom Bingo Night, 5:30 p.m. HS Commons
April 17 - School Board Meeting, 6 p.m.
Unit Office
April 22 - No School
April 25 - Musical 7 p.m.
HS Auditorium
April 27 - Musical 7 p.m.
HS Auditorium
April 28 - Musical, 3 p.m.
HS Auditorium
April 29 - May 3, Mather-ville Spring Book Fair
April 30 - Matherville Intermediate Family Night, 5:30 - 7 p.m.
May 1 - Academic Achievement Awards, 6:15 p.m., HS Auditorium
May 15 - School Board Meeting, 6 p.m.
Unit Office
May 16 - JH/HS Jazz Band Concert, 8 a.m.
HS Auditorium
May 17 - Lip Sync Contest, 7 p.m.
HS Auditorium
May 21 - JH/SH Band Concert, 8 a.m.
HS Auditorium
May 23 - Beginning JH/SH Band Concert, 8 a.m.
HS Gym 1
May 26 - Graduation 2 p.m., HS Gym
May 27 - No School, Memorial Day
May 28 - Letterman's Banquet, 6 p.m., HS Commons and HS Auditorium
June 7 - Last Day of School

State Champ -
Max Ryner



Sherrard's Max Ryner won the IESA state wrestling championship at #167 on Saturday, March 9. Coach Chad Kirkhove (left), Sherrard alumni wrestler, first year coach, and Conner O'Donnell (right) head Jr. High wrestling coach are pictured with Ryner.



Athletic Calender

Spring Sports are in full swing!

To see team rosters, team photos, game schedules, event locations, and postponed games go to: <http://il.8to18.com/SherrardHS>

- Sign up for updates:
- Go to the athletic calendar
 - E-Mail Alert - on the right side of the page and click the "Click to Join" link.
 - Then, "Create New Account"
 - Select the sports that you would like to receive email alerts and click - "Add Selected Sports" button.

Also search the Sherrard Boosters Facebook group to stay connected.

www.sherrard.us



From the desk of the Superintendent



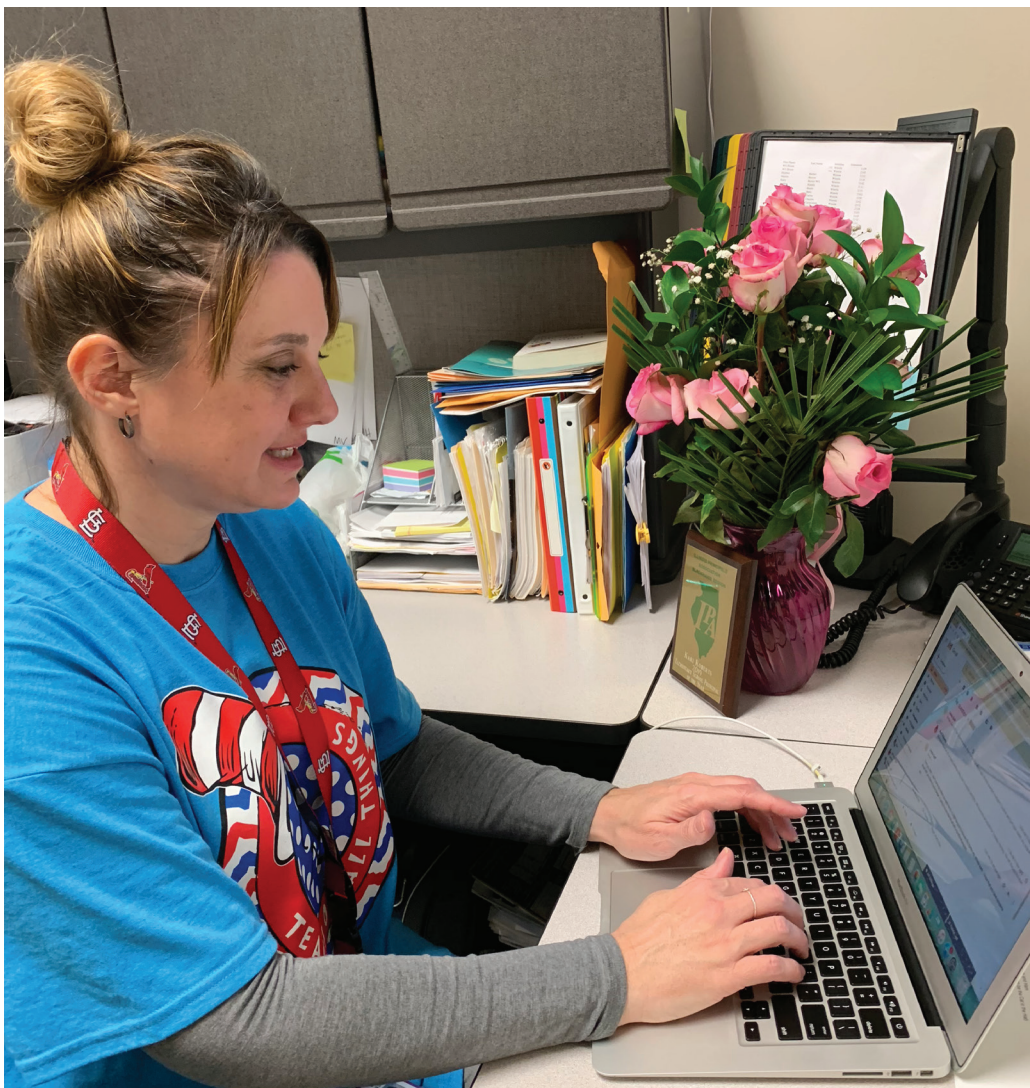
Our school district accomplishes so much more when we stay organized. On the morning of Saturday, March 5, 2017, the Board of Education met with a group of staff, students and community members to begin the process of developing a strategic plan. The meeting was facilitated by a repre-

sentative from the Illinois Association of School Boards. Eight action teams were then established to work on various projects identified at the meeting. A final report was given to the Board at its regular meeting on February 20, 2019. There were a number of major outcomes that came from the strategic

- plan. They include:
- An increase of the high school graduation rate
 - A computer repair class for students

Continued on Page 3
Superintendent

Award winning principal celebrates the positives daily



VIOLA — Winola Elementary School Principal Kari Roberts received the Principal of the Year award from the Blackhawk Division of the Illinois Principal Association.

Roberts received the award at a ceremony Monday.

“Every day is definitely different from the one before,” she said. “It is not always an easy job, but at the end of the day, I can rest easily knowing that every difficult decision I have made, has been based on what is best for our students.”

Sherrard High School Principal Tim Wernentin, who also serves as the Black Hawk Region Director for the Illinois Principals Association, said it was a difficult choice between the candidates.

“Kari’s experiences, materials and letters of recommendation were very impressive. ... The committee felt she was the strongest candidate.”

She said she enjoys seeing students progress from year to year and working closely with families — a role she said, that is different from a teacher’s.

“I absolutely loved teaching” but said she wanted to have an impact on a

greater number of students and enjoys supporting the growth of teachers and staff.

“It is like one big family, which has a huge impact on our students’ well-being.”

Roberts said she couldn’t do the job without a strong administrative team, staff, families and students.

She also credited success to her mentor: longtime, now-retired principal Polly Dahlstrom.

“I wouldn’t have made it through the first couple years without her,” she said.

Roberts, who attended Sherrard schools as a child, now lives south of Milan in the district, with her four daughters: Kaylee, 20, a junior at Western Illinois University; Emma, 17, a senior at SHS; and twins Maddie and Ellie, 6, who are first-graders at Winola Elementary.

She began her teaching career in 2003 as a substitute. In 2005, she was hired to teach fourth and second grade full time at Winola Elementary. In 2013 she became principal of Sherrard Elementary and served in that position for two years. Roberts has been the principal of Winola Elementary

for the past three years.

Roberts said, “There are so many incredible educators in the Quad City area. It’s exciting to be recognized by my colleagues and to have others acknowledge the profession in a positive way.”

The nominees completed online essay questions and submitted their resume and three letters of recommendation.

Each region’s board of directors review the materials and selects a winner.

Two other awards were handed out to local educators. Assistant Principal of the Year was awarded to Rowdy Fredericksen, of Wilson Middle School, in Moline. Heidi Lensing, the principal at Ridgewood Elementary, in East Moline, earned the Herman Graves Award (for dedication and service to IPA).

All the winners are now under consideration for the state-level awards.



Continued from Page 1
Superintendent

- The renovation and re-imagining of the elementary computer labs
- The seamless replacement of the District’s retiring business manager
- An increase in the number of students participating in dual credit classes
- An increase in the number of students participating in Advanced Placement classes
- An increase in the District’s social media presence on Twitter and Facebook
- Implemented branding projects including logos, a motto and a hashtag. A district journalist was also hired.
- A new District website and the establishment of a new part-time website manager position
- The installation of a Honor Wall at the high school to note graduates who served in the armed forces
- Resolution of the issues of attendance centers, a centralized campus and a universal start time

We are grateful for all the individuals who participated in the strategic plan activities. The ideas, experience and knowledge of the participants has been invaluable. The District will now begin the process of developing a new strategic plan that will propel us down the road to continued improvement. I’m looking forward to it!

January - Kathy Gray



Teacher Features

Full name: Kathy Monique Gray

Position: 4th grade teacher – Sherrard Elementary

Years in District/Current Position: 2nd year full-time, 4th grade

Degree: Graduated from Spoon River Valley High School and went on to obtain Bachelors Degree in Agriculture Education Degree from WIU. I continued my education by obtaining a Bachelors in Accountancy (WIU). Finally, I returned to graduate school to earn my elementary education endorsement (WIU).

Why Sherrard School District? : I started subbing for the Sherrard School District 6 years ago. The administration and staff welcomed me into all the buildings and I felt right at home. I enjoyed going into all the classrooms and working with the students. I knew that Sherrard was the right fit for me due to my experiences at the elementary schools when I subbed - I knew it was time to get my elementary education endorsement. I spent 2 1/2 years going to graduate school and I am excited to have a full-time position within this district.

Family: I have been married to my husband, Donald, for 18 years. I have three children: Matthew (15), Megan (13), and Mason (10).

Pets: Dog- Susie, Cat, Fuzzball

Hometown: Grew up in London Mills, IL, on the family farm, - home of the Spoon River Drive

Fav Animal: My favorite animals are the lambs.

Fav Color: Burgundy

Fav Food: Steak and french fries

Fav Book: East of Eden by John Steinbeck

Fav Movie: Remember the Titans and The Man from Snowy River

Fav vacation place: Vacations are not in our cards, as we participate in too many travel sports - so wherever we play for the weekend is considered a vacation - short weekend getaways with the family to play in ballgames -- I did take a Caribbean cruise many years ago and loved Aruba.

When you’re not teaching what are you doing? : You will always find me working on the farm.Right now lambing season is underway. Most of my time is spent in the lambing barn taking care of the lambs. Farm life is different from most. There are no days off and the livestock comes first. My schedule is usually prioritized around the farm and what needs to be completed. My three children keep me busy, running from one sporting activity to the next.

What do you do for fun? : Relaxing in front of the TV-when time allows, playing out in the yard with the kids. Waiting for a time to just read for fun -- I miss that!

Favorite part of teaching? : Getting hugs from the students, watching their eyes light up when the “light-bulb” moment occurs, and seeing that shy child begin to raise their hand, answering questions, wanting to read out loud - as they are feeling more confident and comfortable with themselves and in the classroom.

What is something unusual or unique about you that your students don’t know? : While growing up I spent my time in the show ring during the summer, showing sheep, rabbits, cattle, and barrel racing horses. I caught a 450 lb calf during our county calf scramble when I was 14 years old. I also have 5 sisters and no brothers. Boy was our house interesting sometimes! My poor dad.

Best advice for life? : Be flexible and don’t be afraid to make a mistake, it is what you learn from those mistakes that really counts!

February - Rebecca Anderson



Full name: Rebecca Anderson

Position: 7th Grade Advanced Math and Advanced English

Years in District /Current Position: 22 years

Degree: You know, I can’t remember the names of them, but I have a couple from WIU.

Why Sherrard School District?: The Sherrard District is home! My husband, children, and neighbors are graduates of the Sherrard school system. I believe that our schools are some of the best in the area with a dedicated staff and outstanding community support. In addition, our district is filled with students that have unlimited potential. What a powerful combination!

Family: My husband, David, is a lifelong resident. We live on a farm in the Preemption area and have raised three children. Audrey is a contract specialist at George Washington University in Washington, DC. Gabe is an aviation assembler at Cobham in Davenport, IA. Raeann is a certified public accountant for a firm in Austin, TX and works remotely from her home in the St. Louis area. Our children were very prepared for the world through their education at Sherrard.

Pets: I have a unique view on pets. Everyone should have a pet, if they want one. My preference is to not have one. :)

Hometown: I was raised less than a mile from Lock and Dam 18 on the Mississippi River near Gladstone,

IL. The river wasn’t always a good neighbor. My family home was flooded twice. In 2008, my family home was completely destroyed. It was a true challenge to coordinate the packing and moving of a home and a farm in less than three days with my brother!

Fav Color: Black cars, red flowers, and blue sky!

Fav Book: As I tell my students, my favorite book is a dictionary with the thesaurus as my second favorite!

Fav Movie: I tend to fall asleep during a movie. It’s dark, quiet, and I’m sitting still . . .

Fav vacation place: Why limit our favorite to one? Life is too short for limits! “. . .Hawaii for the beaches, Colorado for the crisp mountain air, Europe for the architecture and history . . . “

When you’re not teaching what are you doing?: Reading for enjoyment is a year round staple. After reading, each season has a different activity. Summer is for gardening, fall is for the harvest, winter is for college basketball, and spring is for breathing in the fresh air.

What do you do for fun?: BBB - Bicycling is one of my favorite things to do. My friends and I ride the bike trails all over the Quad Cities. In the winter, I am a Big Ten men’s basketball fan. I watch it almost every night! My third activity is new in my life. I love to babysit for my granddaughter, Avery. Everything you hear about the joy of becoming a grandparent is true! Oh my gosh, she has been a wonder and a blessing for us.

Favorite part of teaching?: The kids! It is a pleasure to:

- watch their eyes light up with the excitement of understanding.
- note their frowns of deep concentration as they work through a challenging problem.
- hear their scoffs of disbelief when they are first introduced to a new idea that they think is ridiculous.
- share their enthusiasm for learning.

Continued on Page 5
Anderson

Sherrard junior upgrades audio system in auditorium



Joshua Gibson poses with the current analog sound board - soon to be replaced with a digital mixer.

SHERRARD — Junior Joshua Gibson is spreading his wings with an Eagle Scout project that will replace 20-year-old audio equipment in the Sherrard high school auditorium. As an actor, he knows firsthand the desperate need for renovation.

“I just saw that there was a lot of work that needed to be done here,” he said, adding that audience members have a hard time hearing the on-stage actors.

The district board agreed to help fund the project up to \$16,000, Gibson plans to raise at least \$2,500 of it. He is planning a trivia night and silent-auction fundraiser for 6-9 p.m. March 23 at Preemption United Methodist Church.

His love for theater began five years ago in seventh grade.

Most recently he played Pete in the school’s production of “Almost Main.”

“I had the longest role in it — I was on stage the most,” he said. “I just played someone — it could be anyone, that’s the point of it. ... My character was the awkward one, I just sat on a bench and waited for my girlfriend to come back after I scared her off. I just sat on stage during the entire intermission just playing with a snowball.”

As a freshman, he played

his favorite roll as Mr. Van Daan, the father of Anne Frank’s love interest, in “The Diary of Anne Frank.”

“I had a lot of character to do there,” he said. “I did like to explore how I could actually try to make someone with an evil dialogue more sympathetic.

He says he appreciates theater as a way to explore different people.

In his research to discover what would be needed to make the auditorium audio functional, he brought in multiple engineers, all with differing opinions on what it would take.

Rexroat Sound, out of Colona, is doing the work that includes purchase and installation of 48-channel digital mixer, Lavalier wireless microphone system, remote, monitor speaker for the sound booth, receivers, system control panels, installation supplies and labor for \$14,142.99. Gibson will also be painting and adding shelving in the control room.

The cost includes two trade discounts: the first, installation labor totaling \$1,110 for advertising in the school’s printed programs for one year, and \$280 for two scouts’ labor for up to eight hours.

Gibson said it all started

with the Ronald Reagan Student Leadership Program he attended last summer — an honor afforded to only 200 students out of more than 1,000 applicants, according to Gibson.

“They helped me figure out what I’d have to do for this,” he said.

He said the changes also would affect the pit band.

“Last year, the pit band had to go as softly as possible for any sound to be heard at all. Having actual sound coming from the speakers from the actual people we need them coming from is good.”

The impact is far-reaching. Drama director Jill Benin said the transition to a digital board would help students better mix sounds and control the sound levels.

“A digital board is also the standard, and students that are interested in working in sound or other related fields after high school will gain a more applicable set of skills.”

She said the only updates had been microphone purchases since she began in 2000. Benin said the auditorium was heavily used with four drama productions, a junior high play, variety show, band concerts, meetings, student orien-

tations, awards banquets, meet the teams, elementary programs and so on.

“It only seats 265, so we cannot fit the entire school there, but we can fit a large group,” she said.

The audio renovation project will help Gibson, who began as a Cub Scout 10 years ago, claim the title of Eagle Scout.

“Once I get all the fundraising done and get products installed, fill out paperwork for project completion, once all other requirements completed, I go through a board of review to make sure that I am up to Eagle Scout standards, and then I go through a ceremony.”

Eagle Scout is a rare accomplishment, according to blog.scoutingmagazine.org in 2015. “Since the inception of the Eagle Scout award in 1912, 2.01 percent of eligible Scouts have earned Scouting’s highest honor.”

For Gibson, the rank means following in his grandfather’s footsteps.

“My grandpa got it, and several other people in my family got it. It would be great for me to get it as well,” Gibson said.

He hopes the rank will help him get into Georgetown University in Wash-

ington, D.C., where he wants to study political science and history.

Gibson, an all-around student, is also involved in golf and track and plays trombone in the band. He recently qualified for the History Bee’s regional tournament at the Eastern Iowa Regional Tournament in early January. In April he’ll be headed to Washington for the national competition. He’s also in Scholastic Bowl.

Before he began the project, Gibson consulted with High School Principal Tim Wernentin.

“I was impressed that Josh wanted to partake in this ambitious of a project,” Wernentin said. “Too, I had no idea how much the project would cost, thinking it would be far too expensive for the scope of an Eagle Scout activity.”

He said Gibson had shown, “great ambition, determination and leadership,” as the project has progressed.

“He is not hesitant to take the lead in contacting contractors and develop fundraising activities, all while being respectful of the required processes the school district follows,” Wernentin said.

Gibson hopes to complete the project before the school’s production of, “The Sound of Music,” at the end of April, a performance he’s helping student-direct.



Gibson will also paint and add shelving to the lighting control room used to hold drama supplies.

Continued from Page 3
Anderson

- witness their growth and change from elementary students to young adults.
 - spark their interest on a day they really just don't want to care
 - experience their smiles as they find joy in their day.
- Finally, I just love the kids at Sherrard. They are a special group of people.

What is something unusual or unique about you that your students don't know?: I have driven cars, trucks, tractors, skidsteers, and bookmobiles!

Best advice for life?: Surround yourself with good people as you look ahead, get prepared, make progress, explore options, think big, and dream bigger. Remember to keep it all balanced with living in the moment.



Feb. 28 - Fine Arts Family Night at SGS has a great turnout and was so much fun! Thanks all who attended.

Winola Elementary celebrated Dr. Seuss' birthday as part of Read Across America Day.

Students enjoyed snacks and other "gifts" while listening to stories such as "Hop on Pop," "Cat in the Hat," "The Lorax," "Mr. Brown Can Moo, Can You?," and "Green Eggs and Ham."



Teacher Feature, March - Amy Hunt



Full name: Amy Kathleen Harmon-Hunt

Position: 2nd grade teacher

Years in District/Current Position: 34

Degree: B.A.S. & M. A. T.

Why Sherrard School District?: I'm an alumna.

Family: Husband-- Bruce, daughters--Madeleine, Allison, Amber, Melissa, and five grandchildren

Pets: Buster (border collie), Aiko & Boots (cats)

Hometown: Sherrard, IL

Fav Animal: Snow leopard

Fav Color: I love mostly greens, but all highly saturated colors are favorites.

Fav Food: Veggie pizza and anything peanut butter

Fav Book: Hmm, my favorite kid books would be Pink and Say and Birch-

bark House. My favorite grownup books are the Lord of the Rings Trilogy and Outlander

Fav Movie: The Court Jester and Day After Tomorrow

Fav vacation place: Home

When you're not teaching what are you doing?: I spend time with my wonderful family. I am usually knitting, reading, baking, gardening, singing, cleaning...

What do you do for fun?: Knit and watch Jeopardy

Favorite part of teaching?: It's different every day, and kids are just fun!

What is something unusual or unique about you that your students don't know?: I was the 1979 Sherrard High School prom queen.

Best advice for life?: Read anything by John Wooden or C.S. Lewis, and you'll get the idea!

Teacher Fun

Below: Sherrard teachers enjoying a day of professional learning with the fantastic Monica Genta. A big thank you to Mr. Larry Stone for the donation of our favorite prizes of the day! Who wouldn't want one of these tiger heads in their room? They were a hit.



Students celebrate Valentine's Day



Happy Valentine wishes from Sherrard Grade. We had so much at our parties!



Sherrard Elementary celebrates 100 Days of School in February! We decided to grow old together and many dressed like 100 year olds. So much fun combined with a great day of learning!



Live, from Sherrard, it's STV!

High school program launches budding broadcasters

SHERRARD — Tomorrow's broadcasters are learning their craft at Sherrard High School. The school district's STV program — Sherrard TV — allows students to explore media careers. Students produce and create live and recorded programs using STV's six cameras in three sections; a news desk; an interview desk; a green screen, which is used to layer two video images; and a production room.

Production engineer Britney Burns, a senior, prepares the equipment, operates the computer programs needed for live broadcasts, and creates elements used in shows. She said her media education began in the seventh grade. "When I toured colleges, they showed me their auditoriums with some live features," she said. "That was great!"

Burns is thankful for the program. "It's really great for being such a small school — knowing that some inner-city schools don't have as much as we do," she said. She plans to take courses at Black Hawk College after graduating from Sherrard, possibly continuing her media education. She's also training eighth-graders Sarah Gibson and Addison Szymborski to take over when she leaves.

Brian Hutton, social studies and media production instructor, said that since he took over the media program about a decade

ago, the school has slowly updated its equipment.

"There was so much that needed to be updated," he said. "We actually contacted all three of the major (TV) stations here and asked if (they) have any old equipment. Let us know; we would come and take it off their hands."

Alan Baker, news director at local ABC affiliate WQAD, is a Viola resident whose son attends Sherrard's Matherville Intermediate School. Hutton said Baker arranged for Sherrard to receive about \$20,000 worth of lighting equipment from the Moline-based TV station.

"That's the area we're probably the weakest, is lighting," Hutton said. "We have a green screen we use; it's poorly lit. It just doesn't work very well — we can kind of see the edges around it."

The news desk set also has several dim spots, he said, that will be corrected with the new lights. Sherrard currently offers Intro to Media, Media 1 and Media 2 classes, beginning with students' sophomore years. Junior high students also can get involved with broadcasting, and some teachers use the resource for special class assignments.

High school English teacher Tammy Crippen uses STV for public speaking requirements in her English 4 class. The

"one-of-a-kind" program creates unique opportunities for kids to find their skill sets early on, she said.

"We have helped seven students become media workers — from being in front of the camera to videography," she said.

"We also had two students work with the Olympics for Channel 8 (WQAD). "We have many students who work creating films and a few who are making a living by being in music productions," she said.

Crippen said Hutton and Steve Miller, instructional technology specialist, have put in a lot of work

ton said.

Programs are posted online at sherrardtigerstv.com. Students create everything, including music for segment intros and graphics,

baseball and softball," Hutton said, but currently they can't get the media trailer close enough to run cables for the cameras. "We'll take a look at how we're going to be able to do that."

Over the summer, senior Kaden Stratton transformed a trailer previously used to transport band equipment into a mobile live broadcasting studio. The trailer-turned-studio has production equipment and several monitors and cables to connect to cameras.

Stratton said it takes about seven people to broadcast a live game. Three cameras are on the field or court — an unmanned one for an overall wide angle shot and two operated by students. Three people engineer the broadcast from inside the trailer, and one or two do the talking from the game. Engineers can switch between cameras and set up playback in real time.

The live broadcasts have a delay.

"We can do it without a delay," Stratton said. "But in case something gets messed up or something gets said that shouldn't, we can shut it off."

STV also has broadcast two or three volleyball games, girls' and boys' basketball, and the Tiger Relays track meet. The broadcasts also appear on YouTube.

"We'd like to start doing



Sherrard students Hannah Franklin and Carley Whitsell anchor a live morning broadcast for using the district's STV program.



Above: Britney Burns, Senior, is the Production Engineer for Sherrard's STV program. Pictured, news anchors on the monitors left to right are Carley Whitsell and Hannah Franklin.

Below: Kaden Stratton demonstrates how to use the STV program's mobile studio he helped set up using a trailer passed down from the band program.



so Sherrard students can have the skills sought in today's digital world.

providing every element of television production and broadcasting.

Students create three to four minutes of daily live morning announcements, complete with anchors at a news desk and a green screen. They also broadcast the lunch menus and sporting events, often including "This Day in History" and trivia features.

Media class students create biweekly shows. "I always tell them they have to be web-worthy and, if they're not, I don't post them," Hutton said.

#SherrardRoars



District-Wide Spelling Bee



The Sherrard District spelling bee yielded three school champions to compete in the Augustana Regional Spelling Bee hosted by Rock Island Dispatch/Argus.

Thirty-one students competed at Sherrard High School Auditorium Thursday night, Jan. 17. The Matherville Intermediate and district-wide champion was Grady Steele, his winning word was ‘Babylon’, his alternate is Kyle Jacobs; Sherrard Grade champion was Alex Schriner with the winning word, ‘salutation’, alternate Gavin Cotrell; the Winola Champion is Alex Belha with the winning word ‘hoisted’, his alternate is Joshua Vrieswyk.

Each 1-6th grade classroom held a spelling bee, the winner of each advanced to the district spelling bee. One student per classroom from three buildings, plus

one tie in a first grade room

brought an extra student.

“We had a first grade class that went through several rounds - and there was a tie, and we ran out of words on our classroom list - so we determined as a team we would send two people from that classroom,” said Winola Elementary Reading Teacher Kim Powell.

Steele, Schriner, and Belha will compete in the Augustana Regional Spelling Bee on March 2 at 1 p.m.

Last year approximately 60 students competed from Rock Island, Henry, and Mercer Counties in Illinois and some from Iowa Counties.

Each school winner received a \$5 Dairy Queen gift card, the district-wide winner got a \$10 gift card - all three winners also received a year’s subscription to Encyclopedia Britannica online.

‘Tiger Steel’ Doing Work At Sherrard High School; Ag Metal Fabrication Class Becomes Business Enterprise They call it ‘Tiger Steel’.

It’s Sherrard High School’s ag metal fabrication class.

They have quite the shop and quite the enterprise. Senior Nolan Lucas says the class has raised \$4,000 through different designs they’ve created.

You can learn more about their enterprise through

Tiger Steel



their Facebook page.

search box.

Just type “Sherrard Ag Metal Fabrication” in the

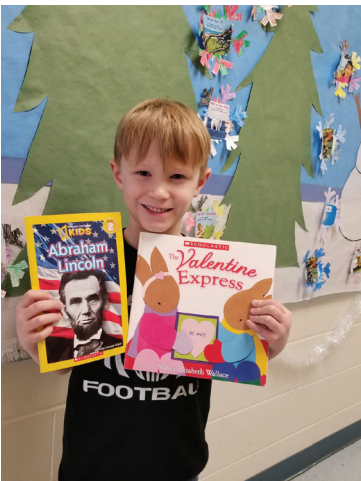
Story by WRMJ.com

Congratulations to Junior High Special Education teacher, Michelle Rolsch who is the WQAD Pay It Forward Award winner. Ms. Rolsch was nominated for continually going above and beyond for the Sherrard students, staff and community. Asentra and WQAD awarded her \$300 for her efforts. The pay it forward story aired Thursday on WQAD news.

Rolsch is pictured below surrounded by students



Snow Day Challenge Winners



Congratulations to our February 12th Elementary Snow Day Challenge winners! They are Braden from Matherville Intermediate, Harrison from Sherrard Elementary, and Mason from Winola Elementary. We were overwhelmed by the number of entries, and are so proud of all of our readers!!! Feb. 14

Above: Five employees from various positions within John Deere came to visit classes last week to talk about career options. They brought their virtual reality augmented welder and allowed students and staff to test their welding skills.

SHERRARD — Oohing and awwing, Sherrard students gathered around fourth- grade teacher Kathy Gray and her 4-day-old lamb.

With the purebred Shropshire lamb folded calmly in her arms, Gray answered students’ questions about what it’s like to raise sheep.

The students were amazed the lamb could walk within 20 minutes of birth — and that it had no name.

“We don’t name the lambs anymore,” Gray said, because there were too many to keep track of. So far, she said, 10 of the ewes on her family’s farm have “lambled,” or given birth, to a total of 19 lambs.

The lambs usually are born as twins, she said, although the farm also has had triplets and quadruplets.

Through interdisciplinary units, Gray’s fourth-grade class has been a hands-on agriculture primer. Farming is integrated into every lesson, including science, social studies, character building and English.

“We talk about the importance of agriculture within our community,” she said.

“Depending on the conversation we are having or the subject we’re talking about, I probably talk about agriculture at least once or twice a day.

“But it is what I am,” she said. “FFA and 4-H (were) an integral part of my life. I grew up on a farm.”

Gray graduated college with an agriculture education degree and taught agriculture at the high

Kathy Gray has a little lamb; sheep feature in Sherrard classes

school level for two years at Armstrong Township High School northeast of Champaign. She returned to graduate school and earned her elementary education endorsement.

As part of their class, her students are graphing birth results from Gray’s ewes. Students learn math skills by relating fractions and percentages to the real-world spreadsheets she maintains as a farmer.

“You have to keep accurate records,” she said. “I teach them about organization — skills, keeping things in folders. You have to know where data is located.

“Farmers are independent,” she said. “They need motivation to do things on their own and keep it going.”

Gray also teaches students how the math skills they are learning now will be relevant throughout life.

“I try to explain that this is something you will carry forward with you, no matter what job you go to,” she said.

The class works math-based conversations based on farming situations.

“We grind our own feed at home,” Gray said. “I have to understand what percentage of what feed I want.

“We’ve talked about four different types of feed and feed rations,” she said.

“If I want 10 halves of a cup of flour, do we talk about 10 halves? No; we will reduce that to a mixed fraction.”

Students also turn the spreadsheet numbers into graphs.

“We talk about data collection, what it means, and what I do with it,” she said. “They will have to use problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, too.”

During social studies, she said, classwork may include how agriculture is a global economy and what that means.

“Right now, we’re really focusing on southern states: what is it they are growing with landforms they have, soil weather, climate, how it’s different from the Midwest,” she said.

Another unit focused on exports and imports related to U.S. agriculture and why the Mississippi River is important.

“Just because we do something in Sherrard, Illinois, it doesn’t stay in Sherrard, Illinois,” Gray tells students. “It will go beyond these walls and beyond this world.” She also teachers students about the cost of opportunity.

“As far as me as a farmer, we don’t do vacations; we have animals,” she said. “The livestock, everybody, depends on you. “You can’t have everything,” she said. “You have to pick and choose.”



all through the lens of a farmer.

“The kids need to have a personal touch with their teachers in the elementary school,” Gray said. “The more they can relate and the more things you can do for them that is not ordinary that they see, it sparks their interest. “Family farms are dwindling,” she said. “So there’s not as many young kids coming into the farming operations.”

The three-generation Gray Family farm includes about 800 acres near Hamlet. She and her husband, Don, have three children — Matthew, 15; Megan, 13; and Mason, 10. They all work on the grain, cattle and sheep farm along with Don Gray’s parents, James and

Beverly Gray.

Gray was a substitute teacher in the Sherrard district for several years while her children were younger. This is her second year teaching full-time in the district.

“I love working with kids — seeing those light-bulb moments go off in their eyes, seeing a kid who never raises their hand start to get into conversation and gain the confidence to answer questions in class,” she said.

“We’re here for the kids,” she said. “These are our future generations that we want to be successful citizens, and we are trying to promote that as much as we can as teachers.”



Part of the classwork includes discussions of necessary life-traits, such as compassion, perseverance, patience, determination, hardworking and the willingness to learn new things —

