



Doing things the Speedway Way

Speedway senior wins prestigious Lilly Scholarship

Senior Chiamaka Vanessa Ndubuokwu learned earlier this month that she is one of eleven Marion County seniors to receive the prestigious Lilly Endowment Scholarship. This honor earns Vanessa a full scholarship to any public or private Indiana college plus a \$900 per year stipend to pay for books.

Vanessa is currently ranked in the top ten percent of her graduating class and she is enrolled in six AP classes this semester along



Chiamaka Vanessa Ndubuokwu

with enrollment in a dual credit Spanish class through Ivy Tech. This commitment to her studies was just one of many reasons why Vanessa is a perfect fit for this honor.

Each school is entitled to nominate two students for this honor and eleven Marion County high school seniors are selected by the Lilly Endowment for this award.

“I had to submit my resume and write four essays which included talking about the financial benefits I might receive from this scholarship and my interests in what I might like

to study,” said Vanessa who joined the Speedway community in January 2020 after moving from Nigeria. So what are her academic interests?

“I’ve always been interested in the brain and how it affects people’s actions,” said Vanessa. “Taking AP Psych last year, we watched a video about a researcher and how he studied the brain and used brain imaging to help further things like the study of schizophrenia and how brain injuries impact things like Alzheimer’s. While I’m not completely sure what I wish to study, that is a topic that really interests me.

Lots of people have contributed to Vanessa’s academic success. And when it came to achieving success earning this scholarship, one teacher came to Vanessa’s mind. “Mr. Passwater was someone who really encouraged me and who took the time to work with me and to see this process through,” said Vanessa.

Spell Bowlers post all-time best score

Coached by Tim Curts and David Todd, Speedway’s Spell Bowl team improved in each meet this fall, culminating in a school-best performance at the Indiana Spell Bowl state championship competition.

Held at Purdue University and sponsored by the Indiana Association of School Principals (IASP), Speedway advanced to the state finals by virtue of its score and fourth place finish at the area

competition held in early November. The following weekend, the team advanced to state where it posted its best state score ever.

Two students, Hammee Akintunde and Eris Blair, missed being named ‘bronze’ medalists for their individual performance by just one point.

Speedway recognized as a top school

Niche.com continues to recognize Speedway as a top school in Indiana. For 2023, Niche named Speedway as the top ranked ‘standout’ high school in Indiana, recognizing Speedway for its value to the Speedway and greater Indianapolis communities. Out of 394 public high schools in Indiana, Speedway ranks eleventh overall, placing it in the top three percent of all Indiana high schools.

“We continue to be recognized for excellence in many areas by many organizations and are appreciative of that,” said principal James Claybourn. “None of this is possible without the hard work and dedication of the students taking advantage of the learning opportunities, the teachers that create dynamic learning environments, the parents who send us their children to work with, and the greater Speedway Schools community that works to support all students.”

For more information on how Niche determines its school rankings, visit niche.com.



A FLAIR FOR THE DRAMATIC
Thespians like freshman Alejandro Zarraga had the opportunity to participate in two drama events this fall. In November, the drama department performed “I Hate Shakespeare” and in December, the thespians performed senior Henry Bickel’s adaptation of “The Christmas Carol”.

Photo by
Paw Thaw Moo
SHS Media

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Sparkling Performance

Allison teachers nominate students as they continue to shine



Nicole Torres-Mejia
Angie Lawrence (6th)
“A current student would be Nicole Torres. She has such a positive attitude and shows great effort every day.”



Kevon Johnson
Dee Ann Martin (3rd)
“He is nominated for his incredible leadership, positive attitude, and great desire to be as helpful as possible! He gives his very best on every assignment and really enjoys getting smarter every day! I am so proud of Kevon and all the progress he is making this year!”



Trace Brown
Jessie Foy (3rd)
“Trace is an exceptional student who works incredibly hard in class. He is a great friend to his classmates and when he’s unsure what to do, he uses his problem solving skills to figure out a solution. Trace is an overall fantastic student to have in class.”



Kaylen Turpin
Kim Bennett (2nd)
“Kaylen Turpin is my sparkling performer. She shines at everything she does. All of her work is outstanding because she cares so much for what she does and how she does it.”



Gay Nay Soe
Megan Haney (5th)
“She is always giving her best, even when things don’t come to her easily. On top of giving her best, she is a star when it comes to behavior. I can always count on her to make good choices even when her classmates are not doing the same. She is a fantastic member of our classroom family!”



Richard Ayodele
Laura Fillinger (Kdg)
“I will nominate Richard Ayodele for a sparkling performance in Kindergarten this year. He has been a fantastic leader and a wonderful example for the rest of the class. He is always working hard, being a good listener, and doing his best every day. Way to go, Richard!”



Karina Gomez Medina
Elizabeth Simpson (4th)
“She is an extremely hard worker and always wants to do her best. She does not let the fact that she is still mastering the English language slow her down.”



Johan Martinez
Derek Eads (ELL)
“My student is Johan Martinez Bravo. He is such a hard worker. He has shown growth in writing and is becoming more confident in speaking English.”



Katie Taylor
Christine Clampitt (6th)
“She is a hard working, dedicated student who loves learning! She comes to school everyday with a smile on her face and a positive, infectious attitude. She is a Spark Plug both in and out of the classroom, and truly “sparkles” in everything she does!”



Anthony Herrera
Sarah Miller (4th)
“He is new to our school this year and he works so hard. Anthony is helpful in class and is a great partner with everyone he works with. He is improving his language and not letting anything get in the way of his success. Anthony always keeps trying and never gives up when things get hard. He is also a rockstar at math!”



Brooke Lawrence
Barbara Stroud (2nd)
“She has a fantastic attitude about learning. She leads by example with her positive attitude, kindness, and communication skills. Brooke knows the importance of asking clarifying questions and is always willing to learn something new, even if it’s difficult. She is an individual who will leave “sparkles” everywhere she goes in life.”

Spell Bowl team goes on an academic adventure



The proud members of the Allison Spell Bowl team

Experienced teachers

Cheryl Partridge celebrates 34+ years in the classroom

So many teachers have had the amazing opportunity to become a family at Fisher. Five teachers at this school have been teachers there for over thirty years!

Cheryl Partridge is a second grade teacher at Fisher Elementary and has been teaching for thirty four years! Mrs. Partridge has many favorite parts of teaching, and one of those is seeing all of the excitement on students' faces when they learn something new.

Partridge says that "being able to work with the other teachers at Fisher is wonderful, and developing relationships with the families at Fisher are also my favorite parts."

Partridge knew she wanted to be an elementary teacher from a very early age. She had family members who were also educators, and she could very easily see that they truly enjoyed their careers. "It just made sense to me to follow this career path...it has been so rewarding!" Partridge loved working with and helping children in Sunday school and when she babysat. Mrs. Partridge is a great teacher, and her goals show through the school!

Fisher principal Betsy Snapp, also realizes how enjoyable Mrs. Partridge's class truly is. "She is an amazing teacher," said Snapp. "Mrs. Partridge's students love being in her class. On many occasions, students have talked about how much they love her, how she teaches and her great sense of humor."

Seeing how well Partridge is able to let her students enjoy her class and the impact of the students being so young shows how well she has been able to achieve her goals. Her main goal this year is to continue to encourage and support her students in all areas.



Mrs. Partridge's Second Grade Class:
Greyson Wolf, Harvey Fletcher, Gabriella Hileman, Mason Elias, Parker Roach, Brody Miles, Luke Clutinger.

In addition, learning the new math series is a personal goal for Mrs. Partridge, and it shows how much she is interested in helping her students grow. As Mrs. Partridge always says, "Everyone is always welcome, and be kind, think from your head and your heart."

Proudly representing their school

The Fisher Elementary Spell Bowl team recently took part in the Spell Bowl competition sponsored by the Indiana Association of School Principals. Ten wonderful students practice hard to compete and support each other during the competition.

Led by teacher Danielle Gipson, students practiced twice weekly to gain knowledge of a list of 750 words. Gipson is a fourth grade teacher in her fourth year at Fisher. After coaching a few years ago in Warren Township, the challenge arose for Gipson to coach the Spell Bowl team here at Fisher.

Her experience has helped these students gained confidence in their spelling. "By breaking the list into chunks, it is easier for the students to practice and remember them," said Gipson. Playing online games like Quiz Wizard also proved to be helpful.

All four elementary schools participated in the meet. Each of these students competed well in the eight rounds of competition. Gipson, her coworkers and the parents of the participants are very proud of everything that the student team members accomplished and how well they worked together to compete.



PRESENTING THE CARL G. FISHER SPELL BOWL TEAM.

Arthur C.

Newby

Elementary

Exploring and Experimenting STEM night offers young students more knowledge

By Cayden Goodman
Speedway Student Media

On October 26, Newby Elementary held Family STEM Night. Students, families, and friends joined to learn about some awesome STEM techniques and do different activities. STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, and helps many students and even adults learn how to connect many everyday activities with the educational side of those activities. During this event, students and families were able to use a map to guide them to different classrooms in order to participate in the hands-on activities with teachers providing guidance. Some examples of projects built included a track, coding a car, or a tower of index cards.

One of Newby's biggest mottos for this event was "Racing with STEM" which helped students connect another interest to learning. At the STEM Night, Butler University students had many different activities to help the students learn about STEM more! They had hands-on experiments that helped introduce concepts with building and racing; in turn, it helped the students realize how much you can connect being a student in a school only a few minutes from the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Giving students the opportunity to experience more STEM-like activities helps keep their minds interested in growing and learning more about science, technology, engineering, and math!



Team enjoys success

The Newby Elementary Spell Bowl team learned 750 words in order to compete in the competition. Out of eleven students that practiced, the top eight spellers participated in the competition.

The team spent eight weeks practicing twice a week. Spell Bowl coach Lynn Weathers has been coaching the team at Newby for eleven years and she was helped this year by Mrs. Callfas.

Mrs. Weathers broke up the words to study into 80 words a week. They practiced by playing all sorts of spelling games each practice. Each week, the spellers took a test to see how well they knew the words. The last two weeks, when the stakes were higher, they had the hardest 200 words to study.

At this year's competition, Newby had the most ribbons earned by team members. Madiou Diallo earned a perfect score! Breleigh Dinwiddie, Carvens Francois, and Gianna Feilen earned a near perfect score. Overall, Newby placed 13th in the state for their class. Mrs. Weathers and all of the other teachers and family members are very proud of the hard work everybody has provided!



Frank H.

Wheeler Elementary

Kids staying fit in a fun way

Running Club becomes popular on Tuesdays

By Hsa Eh Say
Speedway Student Media

The Running Club of Wheeler Elementary is continuing their running adventure with new and current members. The program first started in 2016 where an average of 90-100 students would participate.

Every Tuesday after school, club members meet and prepare for their practice. As they run laps around Meadowood Park, they collect beads for each lap run. They build the endurance and stamina necessary to run in the KidsFit 5K.

The tradition of going to the KidsFit 5K every year creates life-lasting memories and team bonding. The unique aspect of this program is that not only students are committed to it, but teachers and parents are too. The Running Club is such a great tradition at Wheeler Elementary School.



Above: Members of last year's club were photographed at the KidsFit 5K Mini-Marathon.

Left: The Wheeler Spell Bowl Team posed for a picture as they prepared to take on other schools in the competition. The Wheeler family is proud of the spellers for their hard work!

Speedway Sparkles is a quarterly publication produced by members of the Speedway High School Student Media Team.

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On November 14th, Wheeler Elementary students joined students from the three other Speedway elementary schools to compete in the Spell Bowl tournament held at Southport High School. Twice weekly, team members would practice their 750 words by sorting them into categories such as compound words or proper names. The commitment the students demonstrated took them to first place among the schools in the Green Class, the division where all of the Speedway elementary schools competed. Overall, Wheeler finished 12th state-wide. Jaden Austin and Henry Woods, stood out as they won the "near perfect" merit ribbons. We are all proud of the members of the Spell Bowl Team.

Additional materials for this issue were submitted by members of the media teams at SHS and SJHS.

Speedway Jr. High

Working towards improvement

Teachers nominate students who moved forward during the semester



Brandon Gallego Verano
nominated by Jacklyn Dizney

“Brandon Gallego Verano has made excellent strides to improve vocabulary and English speaking skills in the past 9 weeks. Brandon is an ENL student who came to Speedway knowing little-to-no English at all. Brandon can now win vocabulary games in class. Brandon is a very hard worker and I am very proud of him.”



Jany Membrano
nominated by Amy Cronin

“Jany really struggled with learning music at the beginning of the year. She was completely new to it. She has worked REALLY hard on all of her work and has improved so much! I appreciate all of her hard work.”



Kevi Bass
nominated by Nick Paden

“Kevi always comes to class with a great attitude, she is a fun student, and she always works hard and tries her best. She has really shown a lot of growth in the past few weeks!”



Luis Arteaga Pina
nominated by Whitney Michalke

“Luis is a very bright and charismatic student! Having only spoken English for a little over a year now, Luis is like a sponge and picks up more language every day at an alarming rate! I’m proud of him and am continually impressed by his skills & talents!”



Rebecca Roberts
nominated by Trevor Long

“Rebecca is a wonderful student who works hard, always has a smile on her face, and is heavily involved in cheer at the junior high. Rebecca has grown as a student learning to think critically, collaborating with peers, and values class time as an opportunity to further her education.”



Verlancia Jean
nominated by Tonya Carlson

“Verlancia’s attitude has gotten so much better. At the beginning of the year, she would get angry if she made a mistake. Now, Verlancia realizes that mistakes are how we all learn. She is so pleasant to work with. I am extremely proud of her.”



Yllibel Andrade Romero
nominated by Whitney Michalke

“As a native-Spanish speaking student new to the U.S., Yllibel started the school year extremely quiet and reserved, being extra cautious of speaking English amongst her peers and teachers. In just four months, she has come out of her shell and is now having full conversations with others. I am very proud of her hard work and the confidence she is gaining!”

Light the Night on Main Street

Members of the Speedway Junior High Choir performed earlier this month at the annual Christmas program on Main Street.

photos below by Joey Davis, SJHS News Crew



THE PERFECT TRIO. Karsyn Austin, Taylor Fitch, Josephine Hopkins.



SHS Highlights

Paying tribute to our heroes

Veteran's Day Convocation presents life lessons

Speedway High School held a convocation on Friday November 11th in honor of Veteran's Day. It was the first in-person Veteran's Day gathering since 2019 due to COVID-19. Following a musical medley of the Armed Services anthems performed by the vocal and instrumental music department, Kevin Rankel shared his story of his son John Rankel, a Speedway graduate who perished in Afghanistan while serving for the United States Marine Corp.

John was a sergeant in the Marines on his first tour of duty in Afghanistan, after having served two tours of duty in Iraq. On June 7, 2010, Rankel led two squads and while on patrol, the lead unit was ambushed by enemy fire. Rankel lost his life while helping save the lives of all members of the lead unit. Rankel provided cover fire so that his military brothers could fall back and as Rankel was trying to retreat, he was fatally wounded. For his actions that fateful day, Sergeant Rankel earned the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star for Valor.

Speedway's athletic department created the John Rankel award, its most prestigious award, in honor of John and the many leadership attributes he displayed both as a Sparkplug and as a member of the United States Marine Corp. Each spring, one senior athlete is selected as the recipient of this prestigious award. Kristin Pagach, a standout member of Speedway's golf, swimming, and track teams was awarded this honor in 2022.



Artistic excellence on constant display during the semester

Not only did the Speedway Theater Department put on its annual fall play performance entitled *I Hate Shakespeare*, the department offered a bonus opportunity earlier this month. Senior Henry Bickel authored an adaptation of the Charles Dickens classic *A Christmas Carol* and the thespians performed Bickel's version of this story on Monday December 12th.

Bickel has participated four years as a member of the tennis program and he has also been a talented cast member of multiple drama performances.

"Our assistant director (John Miller) had wanted to do some sort of Christmas event before and that gave me an idea," said Bickel. "Since *A Christmas Carol* is in the public domain, I decided to create an adaptation of it. I finished it in early October."

Bickel got administrative approval for the show shortly after finishing his writing and the drama department spent the rest of November and early December doing final run-throughs.

Two days after this special drama event, Speedway's music department presented its winter holiday concert. Nearly 1 in 3 Speedway students participate in the music program at Speedway under the direction of Amy Mohl and a bonus convocation for all Speedway High School students was planned for Monday December 19th as a break from the final exam routine.

Girls Who Code expanding its footprint in the STEM world

Molly Price is a senior at Speedway who started Girls Who Code during her sophomore year. "Personally, I wanted to create something that was bigger than myself, something that was different," said Price. "I saw that there wasn't access for women in computing activities, there was a void in accessibility in those types of things.

AP Computer Science teacher Ryan Dunfee and Price started the program to eliminate the void. "In the middle of year 2, there were a lot of people coming into the school their freshman year not knowing anything about coding," said Price. "Elementary schools didn't have anything accessible to these kids in STEM. So, we decided to have nights here to teach younger students, to submerge themselves in the coding world. Our basis to have coding night was for any and all students to have free access to things in this school district they wouldn't have access to."

Price noted that a lot of outside coding opportunities have a barrier placed on them with cost being the largest barrier. The goal of hosting the coding events at Speedway was in large part predicated on eliminating that hurdle. "We had twelve kids last night (December 8th) including three kids who had never done coding before," noted Price. "They got to come here and they loved it. The possibilities are amazing."

Family Nights are open to all students in the Speedway elementary schools. "Students come at 6 p.m. on these nights where they have a lesson, they have dedicated time to work with people in the club and they learn STEM activities," said Price.

The 2023 Family Nights are scheduled for January 10, February 15, March 15, and April 17. "On the 17th, there will be a showcase of projects from our high school club," noted Price who also said that she's working on a potential summer camp for future coders.

To follow the Girls Who Code on social media visit @speedway_gwc on Instagram, and SpeedwayGWC on Facebook. For more information about the group, email Molly at speedway_gwc@gmail.com.



Parents, young women, and Girls Who Code club members join together on a lesson during a recent Family Night event

Photo courtesy of Molly Price.

SHS Highlights

A celebration and a great cause Speedway and Monrovia communities unify

Earlier this month, the Speedway boys and girls basketball teams joined together for a varsity boy/girl doubleheader. While the Sparkplugs won both games in dramatic fashion, there were two other big winners on that night.

The Speedway Athletic Leadership Team (SALT) conducted its third annual Unified Basketball game. Joining with the student leadership team from Monrovia, Speedway's student leaders conducted the annual event that features students from the functional academics programs at both schools. This year, the event featured students that were both junior high and high school students.

Alex DeLisle switched gears rapidly on Friday night. Just minutes after helping lead the Sparkplug girls with 17 points in an overtime victory, DeLisle transitioned to her role on the SALT team. Her mission: She was responsible for working with junior high student Josiah Robinson.

"I was Josiah's buddy," said DeLisle. My job was to walk with him during the game. He was really excited about the game and to be part of a team." Classmate Madison Smith photographed the event on behalf of the SALT team. "The atmosphere was super exciting and it was great to see everyone so happy every time someone scored a point," noted Smith.

The events that evening included the annual Coaches vs. Cancer activity. This year's event was dedicated to the late Matt English, who served for many years as a teacher, basketball coach, and athletic director at Beech Grove. The Matt English Foundation was established by his wife and family to pay tribute to Matt's 'we before me' mantra and all proceeds of the Foundation are dedicated to help pediatric cancer patients at Riley Hospital. The crowd attending this event donated nearly \$1000 to the Matt English Foundation.



Members of the Speedway and Monrovia communities joined together as part of the Unified basketball event. Sponsored by the Speedway Student Leadership Athletic Team (SALT), the event was a monster success. Photo courtesy SHS Media.

Fall athletic accomplishments

Coach Sadie Pflum's volleyball program captured its first-ever Class 3A sectional crown. It was a culminating moment of a season that started with a 1-8 record and ended with a winning record as the team won nine of its last twelve matches including a signature straight set win over Linton-Stockton, a team that finished as Class 2A state runner-up. Speedway has won five Class 2A sectional trophies, two Class 2A regional trophies, and advanced to the state championship match in Class 2A during the 2015 season.

Speedway's boys soccer team won its third Class 2A sectional title in four seasons and won their fourth straight Indiana Crossroads Conference championship in the process. The boys advanced to the regional championship match for the second straight season, falling to the eventual 2A champs (Brebeuf) both seasons.

As members of the Indiana Crossroads Conference, the athletic teams at Speedway compete for an All-Sports championship which is an accumulation of points earned by each sports team ranked from one to eight by sport. With the fall season complete, Speedway's boys program leads all conference schools in the all-sports race. The Speedway girls program sits third in the standings, and in the overall combined race, the Sparkplugs are tied with Cascade at 88 points.

