



# BEAR TRACKS



A NEWSLETTER OF THE SCRANTON SCHOOL FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING CHILDREN



## Awards Day

The morning of June 11th was an exciting one at The Scranton School as we held our annual Awards Day ceremony! The gym was packed with enthusiastic students and supportive parents, families and staff members as students received various awards for academics, athletics, creativity and citizenship! The crowd was entertained with a beautiful ASL rendition of Rascal Flatts, "My Wish", performed by our own Ryane and Eddie. Special congratulations were extended to our eighth-graders, John, Nathen and Ryane, who will be moving on to high school at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf this fall.

The ceremony was followed by an outside barbeque, presented by our wonderful kitchen staff, in the beautiful field behind the school. The weather was warm, the food was delicious and the camaraderie was thoroughly enjoyed by all! We are all looking forward to next year's Awards Day ceremony, so that we might once again celebrate our student's wonderful accomplishments!! ■

# Supervisions -

## A Note from CEO, Don Rhoten



The 2014-15 school year concluded with very moving commencement ceremonies at both the Scranton School and WPSD. In Scranton, we celebrated the graduation of two very fine young men. It was a very special event, a tribute to the young men and their families. Some family members even drove to Scranton from Virginia, to share the experience with their nephew. Surrounded by loving and supportive families, these two gentlemen can't help but be successful in life.

WPSD's commencement was, as usual, full of emotion and pride for members of the Class of 2015. The class was typical of past senior classes in that the students had a wide range of abilities and goals. For example, one graduate plans to attend college, majoring in biology, with the intent of entering medical school...a realistic goal for her. Another graduate plans to attend college and major in accounting, which he should be very successful at. I'd love to hire him in our business office when he's done!

Other students' goals are very different. They plan to work in supportive employment situations and live in assistive living environments. We are equally proud of their accomplishments as we are of those planning to attend college. Sometimes, the more challenges the student faces, the more invested we become in them.

That's what makes WPSD and Scranton so special. Our programs accept and nurture students of all levels of ability. We believe that through individualization, we can meet the needs to all 230 students we serve at both campuses...230 students, 230 programs...

We wish the members of the Classes of 2015 the best as we say goodbye to them and the 2014-15 school year. It was an amazing year, full of accomplishments and I can assure you, the 2015-16 school year will be equally exciting!!!

Thank you - as always - for your support of our kids!



**THE 2014-15 SCHOOL YEAR  
CONCLUDED WITH VERY  
MOVING COMMENCEMENT  
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THE SCRANTON SCHOOL  
AND WPSD.**

Don Rhoten, CEO  
Programs of the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf





# Our *vision*

It is the vision of  
our school to be a  
***Total Learning  
Environment***

for our students.

The Scranton School for  
Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
Children is a special place  
where...

- Our students achieve at the same levels as other children in our society
- Our students reach their highest potential in academics and citizenship.
- Our students achieve independence, high personal aspirations, and pride.



## Kindergarten Graduation Movin' On Up

How often have you imagined "what's next?" Ms. Jennifer Jones's graduating Kindergarten Class was filled with imagination and anticipation of what lies before them in 1st Grade. To the delight of all who attended, our Kindergarten Graduates told their families and guests what they want to be when they grow up and performed the song "1st Grade, 1st Grade" to the tune of Frank Sinatra's "New York, New York".

Principal Cyndy Ward handed out the Kindergarten Graduation certificates and then it was on to family pictures and the traditional balloon release on the front steps of the campus. Lots of smiles from everyone reflected the hopes and dreams that we share for these young people as they move on to the next steps of their education and launch into the future. Good luck graduates! ■



**The Scranton School for Deaf  
and Hard of Hearing Children**

537 Venard Road  
Clarks Summit, Pa 18411  
(570) 585-1000 V/TTY  
(866) 978-1886 VP

[www.thescrantonschool.org](http://www.thescrantonschool.org)





## Middle School Students Tour our State Capitol Building

Middle school students and staff from The Scranton School had a chance experience and a day in the life of state government when they toured the Pennsylvania State Capitol building in Harrisburg, PA on May 6th. Upon arriving and entering into the beautiful Rotunda, students were surrounded by the fast-paced, busy world inside our capitol building! After a warm welcome, we were on our way to meet Senators and Representatives. This included a brief meeting with State Representatives and Senators. Our students really enjoyed meeting their Legislators and talking about issues that were important to them. The students asked so many good questions about what was happening and were able to get many answers from their Legislators! We were able to sit in the gallery during both Senate and House sessions. Both times, the students and staff were acknowledged and praised by Legislators!

After lunch, we got a chance to tour the Capitol. Unfortunately, the Governor was not in his office, but we got a chance to see the brilliant artwork, where press conferences are held, and the desk where Governor Wolf signs bills into law. After a long day of many pictures, handshakes, and smiles, the students were ready to return home, but not without a stop for delicious pizza! ■

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## Family Learning Weekend

We kicked off May in an exciting way at The Scranton School - Family Learning Weekend! Ten families shared their weekend with us participating in workshops and classes (and having a little fun!). Karen Roudybush, WPSD reading specialist, presented a literacy workshop, which was packed with activities for the entire family.

The Saturday parent panel featured Deb Morton, Nicole and Mark Miller. As parents that have participate in our Early Intervention program, they shared their story of raising a child with hearing loss and answered questions from families beginning the journey.

Family Learning Weekend is always an exciting time at the Scranton School, and this years ranked up there with the best!!!! ■



# The Scranton School is Growing Again

Chief Executive Officer Don Rhoten announced to the community at large in March that The Scranton School would be expanding its facilities again. The primary focus of the Third Phase of renovations is a new wing of Health and Middle School classrooms. The new wing will allow for Middle School students to have a dedicated area and provide for Elementary students and related-service areas to have more classroom space in the current areas.

The new wing will consist of 6 classrooms: health classroom, 3 Middle School classrooms, an expansive Career Exploration Center, and a state of the art Communications Classroom. With the assistance of the William G. McGowan Charitable Trust, the Career Exploration Center will provide an area for students to acquire skills that will begin to prepare them for life after school. A work training and life skill development area will highlight the new classroom that is sure to provide hands-on and experiential learning for Middle School and Applied Studies students. The Communications Classroom will allow Middle School students to expand their knowledge and use of technology through a variety of mediums. Students will be able to plan, create, produce, and edit videos that will relate to academics, critical thinking skills, and team-building activities. In addition, a public speaking class is planned for the Fall that will build on language development, presentation skills, and technology use in the Classroom.

Construction on the project began in April and is scheduled to be completed and ready for when students return in August for the 2015-2016 school year. ■



## ASL Classes

The Scranton School is delighted to provide over 50 members local community, parents, and staff with American Sign Language (ASL) classes. The courses are held at our Scranton School campus every Wednesday night for six weeks each session. The students focus on learning basic vocabulary and are exposed to Deaf culture and history. For many of the students, the highlight of this last session was a visit from Radoslava Slavova and Vladimir. Radoslava and Vladimir are proud alumni of The Scranton School and WPSD. They were able to answer some of the students' questions about life and experiences they have had as successful deaf students and adults.

We are very excited that this community outreach has been so well attended. Not only are the members of the community given the opportunity to learn ASL, but these courses also serve as a resource for our parents. Parents are able to learn how to better communicate with and best support their children. As a school, we are committed to continuing to offer our local community the opportunity to learn about ASL and The Scranton School as well as to support the families of the children we serve. If you are interested in learning more about our ASL classes, please feel free to contact The Scranton School at 570.585.1000. ■



# Dorm Activities

## Developing Independence

Using fun community-based events, activities and businesses, we seek to empower our dorm students by equipping them with the necessary skills for independence and the confidence to apply those skills effectively in a variety of community settings. During our regular outings to the library, movie theater, restaurants, local sporting events, and other community locations and activities, staff members use four simple steps to develop each student's readiness for independence; *Orient*, *Model*, *Support*, and *Shadow*.

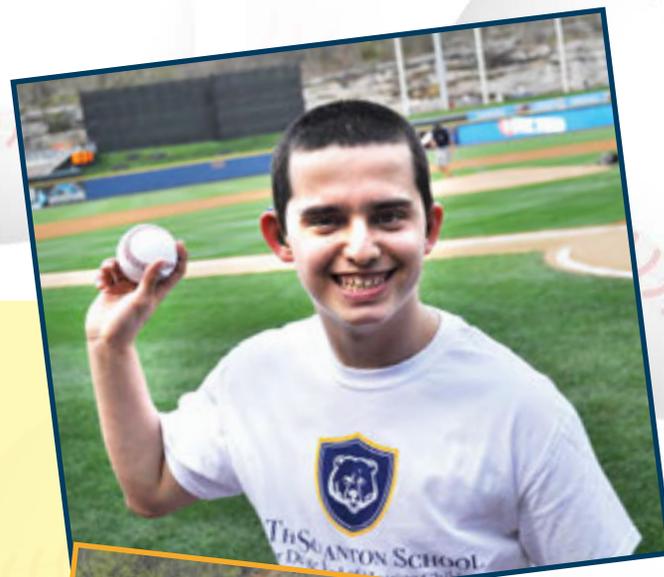
Staff members *Orient* students by informing them about the destination, the anticipated activities and the criteria for attending. Students receive direction about proper attire and the kind of behavior/participation that is expected (including paying and tipping when appropriate) from them during the activity. Next, staff members *Model* the expectations that have been communicated to students and demonstrate strategies for navigating that specific environment. This allows students to observe "how it's done" in real time and provides lots of opportunities to ask questions. In the *Support* phase, students exercise their emerging independence skills as they start to establish ownership of the environment while staff members begin to drop back - remaining close enough to jump in and provide assistance and additional coaching as needed. As students begin to demonstrate confidence in a particular environment, staff members assume the role of observer and *shadow* students, allowing independent decision making opportunities and providing feedback and tips for future reference.

As students mature and gain mastery of a variety of independence skills, we are always thrilled to be there when they begin to engage other students and mentor their peers in new experiences through this same four-step process. ■



## Take Me Out to the Ball Game

There is nothing quite like the feeling of a few thousand people watching YOU in a pressure situation – but our very own Nathen Taylor Noll handled that pressure like a pro as he stepped up to the pitcher’s mound at PNC Field before the start of the Scranton Wilkes-Barre RailRiders baseball game. He fired the ball right down the middle and spent the rest of the night smiling from ear-to-ear! There was a lot to smile about too. From another outstanding performance of the National Anthem on the infield grass by our Middle School students, to the delicious snack foods at the concession stands, the beautiful weather, and the great company of our friends – the night was a great success! ■





## Dorm Family Picnic

The end of the year Dorm Family Picnic was a highlight of the school year. Perhaps because it signaled the beginning of the end of the school year and the start of summer vacation – or more likely because getting together with family can be a whole lot of FUN! Students and their family members, and a few invited guests were treated to a delicious barbecue dinner followed by the 5th and deciding game of the dorm's "Wiffle Ball World Series."

The competition had been fierce all season long with the Boys and the Girls tied at two games a piece. Some aggressive recruiting must have taken place before the picnic – as parents, siblings, grandparents, and invited guests all joined the game for some very serious competition. The students were "all business" as they formed up their teams for the game. At the top of the 5th and final inning, the girls held a one-run lead as the boys stepped up to the plate for their final at-bat. In dramatic fashion, the girls held off the boys' last-ditch efforts and secured the inaugural Wiffle Ball Championship Crown! Congratulations, ladies! And thank you to everyone for an amazing evening of laughter and memories! ■





## Field Day Wraps Up a Healthy Year

The Scranton School seeks to educate the whole child. A major component of this type of education is teaching students to be healthy. Health and Physical Education classes are the main avenue to helping students learn the importance of exercise, health, and wellness. Additionally, this years activities such as a Red Ribbon Week, Take it Outside Day, and Special Olympics all provided students with opportunities. The summarizing activity for the entire year is the annual Field Day!



Students and staff took to the soccer field and enjoyed a beautiful day exercising and playing games together. Parachute games, races, hula hoops, Capture the Flag, and of course water games helped everyone stay cool and enjoy being together. Many thanks to the Parent Staff Organization and Bayada Home Health Care of Chinchilla, PA for providing refreshments for all! ■

## Retirement Party

Congratulations to Alice Casparro, Gloria Spicer, and Elrica Swank on their retirement! Thank you for your commitment to our students! ■



# After-School Activities Gaining STEAM

One of the ways that we promote creativity and innovation is through fun and exciting after school programming for our students. A great deal of current academic research has demonstrated the value of after school programs that promote the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Math – or STEAM.

Our after school Art Club has been gaining traction for the past two years and this year was one of our most highly attended clubs. The capstone of this club, in partnership with our daily art classes under the direction of Ms. Jenna Mancini, is the annual *Applauding the Arts* student art gallery held each Spring. Once again, our students' work filled the gallery with an impressive variety of artwork for family and public viewing. Select pieces from the over 400 pieces on display in the school art gallery were also displayed at the West Scranton branch of the Citizens Savings Bank! Move over Van Gogh, Vermeer, Rembrandt, DaVinci, Munch and Michelangelo!

The addition of our new LEGO™ Club joined our spring activities lineup and was an instant hit as our most highly attended after school program this year! Students engaged in creative and directed play and learned how to read and follow sequential construction plans as they built structures and vehicles using LEGO™ bricks. The skills that the students learn and practice in this program are helping to prepare them for higher-level thinking, problem solving, and cooperative learning experiences – proving once again that learning truly does not stop at 2:55 with the dismissal bell! This inaugural program was so successful that we are exploring options for expanding it in some very exciting ways. Stay tuned! ■



# Annual Car Show has ANOTHER Record Setting Year

The Car Show at The Scranton School is a yearly tradition that community members, families, staff, and students look forward to every year. Car owners from all over Northeastern Pennsylvania converge on The Scranton School with a variety of vehicles. This year cars included Model A's, Rat Rods, Mustangs, and Cadillac's. The goal of the show is to raise money to directly benefit the students of The Scranton School.

The day began a bit cloudy, but soon cleared up to allow for beautiful sunshine and blue skies! 108 beautiful cars rolled in to campus and were on display for over 800 spectators. \$2,500 in cash prizes was awarded for Best in Show, Best Truck, Best Original, Best Customization, Student Choice, Compressed Natural Gas Division, and the CEO's award. In addition to prizes, 40 gift baskets were raffled off to the patrons that purchased tickets. Each of these baskets was made possible by donations from local businesses. We are thankful for each of them and their support of our students. We are also thankful to our major sponsors Cabot Oil & Gas Corporation and the Pocono Mountain Street Rods for helping to make the event a great success! We are so thankful for our continued partnership with the Pocono Mountain Street Rods and congratulate them on their 40th Anniversary! A number of other businesses sponsored the event and we are thankful to them also their contributions in making this day a success. In total, the event brought in a record high of over \$11,000 that will directly benefit our students!

See you next year on Sunday, May 15th! ▪





## Two Students Graduate from The Scranton School

Monday, June 8th marked a significant day in the life of two students from The Scranton School. Nick Bonifanti and Russell Heath received their diplomas marking the successful completion of their studies at The Scranton School for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Children. As part of the celebration Nick and Russell each received Vocational awards recognizing their skill development and contributions to the Food Services Department at The Scranton School and to the National Running Center in Clarks Summit, PA.

Board of Trustee Member and Commencement Speaker, Ms. Denise Brown delivered a strong challenge to Nick and Russell to achieve their dreams and to remove the words "I can't" from their vocabulary. Ms. Brown shared stories from her own life where she had to persevere and work hard to achieve success. After Ms. Brown's address Nick and Russell received their diplomas and each gave a speech thanking their families and supporters for all of their help over the years. We wish Nick and Russell the best in their future endeavors and can't wait to see them succeed! ■



# Hear and Now- Hearing Assistive Technology in the Classroom

This year's Bear Tracks featured a 4-Part Series called "Hear and Now." Dr. Denise Prislupski authored the series that focused on hearing loss in adults, children, and what types of technology are available for those with a hearing loss. The 4th and final part will focus on educational technology.

Whenever noise, distance and reverberation are present, even the best hearing instruments can use an extra boost. When working with students who are deaf or hard of hearing, teachers might notice that the students may struggle to hear in the presence of background noise even while wearing hearing aids and cochlear implants. Students with minimal or fluctuating hearing loss, unilateral (one-sided) hearing loss or attention problems also struggle with background noise interference and distance effects, and may not be candidates for hearing aids. Hearing Assistive Technologies (HAT) or FM (Frequency Modulated)/digital wireless and classroom audio distribution systems (CADS) are a means of addressing this issue. The use of this wireless technology provides a multitude of benefits to students with and without hearing loss, as well as to teachers.



If a classroom is equipped with a sound field or CADS system, there is an improved signal to noise ratio for everyone listening. Basically, it becomes easier to hear the person who is talking over all of the background noise. This is much like the use of a PA system and microphone in a noisy gym during an assembly. Without the microphone, hearing the speaker in the back of the room would be nearly impossible. The use of the microphone, however, makes it quite easy for everyone to hear the speaker. In much the same way, a CADS or sound field system makes it easier for all students in the classroom to hear over the noise coming from classmates, noisy chairs, or loud ventilation systems. Also, teachers move around the classroom or turn away from students when writing on a chalkboard or smart board, causing the loudness of their voice to vary. Additionally, teachers, themselves, experience benefits in the form of reduced vocal strain and a decrease in need for repetitions.



The benefits of personal FM systems are often even greater for children with hearing loss. Personal FM systems cannot be heard by every listener in the room. Rather, they send signals directly from the teacher's microphone and transmitter directly to the student's receiver, which is typically attached to either a hearing aid or cochlear implant. Personal FM systems act as a means of reducing the speaker to listener distance,

thus improving the signal-to-noise ratio. In effect, they act as though the speaker's mouth is within inches of the listener's ear. This makes it much easier for the student to hear the signal over background noise.

*Continued on page 14.*



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## Hear and Now

Essentially, these systems improve classroom acoustic environments by improving signal to noise ratios. Hearing aids and cochlear implants help children who are deaf and hard of hearing to hear. FM and other wireless systems help them sort through all of the noise to focus on the key signal where their attention should be directed. They make it easier for children to hear what they are supposed to hear in the midst of classroom chaos and noise.

Personal FM systems consist of a microphone, a transmitter (or mic-transmitter combination), a receiver and some method of routing sounds from the receiver to the student's ear. The teacher wears the microphone and transmitter. The microphone is placed eight inches or less from the teacher's mouth. The transmitter changes the electrical signal from the microphone into an FM signal, which is sent to the student's receiver. Because the teacher's mouth is close to the microphone, background noise is much softer by comparison. In addition, no matter where the teacher stands in the classroom, the student will hear the teacher's voice as if it was coming from a few inches away. Most FM systems also allow teachers to connect audio and audio-visual equipment to the FM transmitter, providing a clear audio signal to the student. FM transmitters plug straight into any multimedia device's audio-out jack, letting your child hear sounds such as TV programs, MP3's, video games and educational software via their FM receivers, without needing to crank up the volume.



There is a large variety of FM systems and options available for the classroom. Audiologic counseling, demonstration and instruction are important components of a successful FM amplification system. The child, parent(s) and teacher(s) need to be involved in the decision-making process regarding FM systems, to determine the most appropriate FM system for a particular child, one that will provide the most benefit and flexibility in the student's environment.

In summary, much has been written about classroom sound-field and FM amplification systems since they were first introduced about thirty years ago. The rationale underlying these systems is very simple: how well children hear a teacher affects how well they learn. The more they can hear, and the less they have to strain and guess, the better chance they will have of learning their lessons. The hearing "boost" offered by these systems seems to be advantageous for children with all degrees of hearing loss, but has also been shown to help children with special auditory needs (e.g. children with central auditory processing problems, attention deficit and learning disorders, and second language learners). Basically, they take some of the auditory strain out of the auditory learning process.

If you would like to hear an example of what an FM system sounds like or how it can help in a classroom, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ln8NHZVfJkQ> to view an excellent video on this subject.

*Dr. Denise Prislupski Au.D. completed her undergraduate studies at Marywood University where she received her Bachelor of Science degree in Communication Disorders. She furthered her studies at Bloomsburg University where she received her Masters of Science degree in Audiology. She completed her post graduate studies at SALUS University formerly PCO in 2002. She practices at Audiology and Hearing Centers of NEPA and is the audiologist at The Scranton School for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Children. Dr. Prislupski was named a Top 25 woman in Business in Northeast Pennsylvania. ■*



# Outreach News



## Hearing Screenings in Hershey

Even Elmo volunteers his time for our preschool. On May 16, Elmo and our Outreach team did hearing screenings at a family festival where our preschool classroom is located. ■



## Arts Festival

Staff and students from WPSD spent a beautiful Saturday afternoon at the Childrens' Discovery Zone at the Three Rivers Arts Festival. Hundreds of adults and kids stopped by to finger spell their name using American Sign Language! ■

## Silent Town USA



On June 13, the Outreach Center in Camp Hill, along with the Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing setup a "Silent Town," with We set up a market, a medical clinic, a bank, a post office, an electric company, a pizza shop, a restaurant, a library and town hall.

This was an opportunity for hearing participants to visit a town run by deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals and experience what its like to not be understood. Participants had tasks/chores to do in the town and had to figure out how to complete them. Our "mayor", Denise Brown from ODHH, hosted a town meeting at the end of the event to discuss deaf culture, hearing loss, and technology.

Thanks to everyone who participated and helped make this event a success. ■

# Outreach News



## Hershey Preschool

The school year may be over but we are celebrating many firsts and new beginnings in Hershey. We recently welcomed a new speech therapist to our team (from Sovia Therapy). We welcomed 2 visitors from WPSD to the classroom, Vicki Cherney and Brian Slavinsky and Cyndy Ward and Nicole Klem from The Scranton School.

In the classroom, we've celebrated new milestones as we practice our letters, colors, counting, and following two-step directions. We've learned about spring, gardens, community helpers, the farm and the zoo. We love animals! ■

## Larry Siegel Visits to PA

The latest workshop with Larry Siegel, "Securing the Appropriate Placement/Services for Your Child" was a huge hit in Camp Hill, Allentown and Clarks Summit. Attendees included EI service coordinators, teachers and parents. Below are some comments from attendees:

- "This presentation gave great information on the ways to understand the IEP process and helped me understand the laws and information on communication."*
- "This workshop is a great support for parents."*
- "The greatest outcome for me was understanding the difference between federal vs. state law."*
- "This gave me such a better understanding of my child's rights." ■*



# Outreach News



## Toddler Group in Camp Hill

Toddler Group continues to grow with new friends and families. We've planted flowers, tried a variety of kinds of food for the first time, explored together and realized we don't all like snakes. We look forward to more time together after the summer break. ■



## Toddler Group Sessions

Children ages 12-35 months and their parents.

### Fall Session

Thursdays, September 24 - November 12, 2015  
from 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

### Winter Session

Thursdays, January 21 - March 10, 2016  
from 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

### Spring Session

Thursdays, April 14 - June 2, 2016  
from 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

### Location

WPSD/Scranton School Outreach Center  
3820 Hartzdale Drive, Camp Hill, PA 17011

For more information or to register, please contact  
Jessica Marks at 717-909-5577 or [jmarks@wpsd.org](mailto:jmarks@wpsd.org).

