

Student Farmer Frontline

What's Up With TUPS?

edited by Angelyn Ansah, Grade 12



Introducing our 2023-2024 Student Farmer Frontline Committee!

Bottom Row (from left to right): Belicia, Denae, Angelina, Tori, Isabella, & Andrew

Top Row (from left to right): Bailey, Nkechi, Ayanna, Harrison, Debby, Leo, Jeremy, Peter, Angelyn, & Samantha

Not pictured: Alexa, Andrew, Ava, & Roland

After School at Franklin

by Belicia Pinkrah, Grade 12

For many elementary schoolers, staying after school usually means staying until dusk before getting picked up by parents coming home late from work. However, at Franklin Elementary School, staying after school also means learning essential literacy skills in a fun and engaging way.

During the month of November,

Franklin had expanded their previous after school program with their two coordinators, Ms. Nelson and Ms. Santoro, who run the after school and reading programs, respectively. The program they came up with is called Beyond the Bell. Targeted towards students in grades 1-4, not only are important reading skills enforced, but math and STEM activities, homework help, and snacks are available during those four days a week. The program proves to be especially beneficial during a time where



Students in Franklin Elementary School's After School Program

What's Up With TUPS?

many students are still struggling with learning loss from the pandemic lockdowns. According to The Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford University, the district has the average 3rd-8th grade student losing an average of 1.23 grade levels in math and 0.468 grade levels in reading during the 2019 to 2022 school years[1].

However, to be a part of this program, one doesn't have to be part of the after-care program that Franklin provides. Instead, parents their children up in a separate application in order to participate.

Well, so how are the reviews? According to Dr. Baskerville-Williams, kids are having an amazing time so far and parents are definitely noticing. At the time of writing this, there's an active waiting list. Despite this setback, Franklin's novel concept is gaining popularity and will hopefully inspire more schools in the district to follow in their footsteps.

KMS Introduces New "ASL" Club

by Denae Johnson, Grade 12

New this school year, the American Sign Language (ASL) club is being led by Ms. Arrieta. According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, American Sign Language is "the primary language of many North Americans who are deaf and hard of hearing". ASL arose around 200 years ago and uses hand signals and facial expressions to communicate. Teaching ASL is so important, especially with diversity increasing at a rapid rate in America. You never know when you will be in a situation where knowing ASL comes in handy, and as an American citizen, it is a helpful language to know.

Arrieta was inspired to bring ASL to Kawameeh Middle School after minoring in American Sign Language during her time at Kean University. Arrieta's professor in college was deaf, and she says that it was a "great experience to have someone who is not only an advocate but was able to share with us firsthand her experiences and the importance of inclusion". With the diversity of Union, Arrieta hopes that the ASL Club will open more doors for

support and unity.

The ASL Club meets every other Thursday for half an hour after school. When asked about the club, Arrieta says that the "goal is to spread awareness and promote the inclusion of Deafness and Deaf culture". During the club, Arrieta shows students videos about deaf culture, talks to them about deaf current events, and discuss deaf representation in social media with them. Students also learn basic signs and play games to practice speaking the language. So far, students have learned the alphabet, finger-spelling, and numbers.

Ronald Zieser on How UHS Sports Transition Between Seasons

by Jeremy Rosero, Grade 12



Pictured: Ronald Zeiser, UHS Athletics Director

Ronald Zieser, a former UHS student, became the UHS Athletic Director in 2022. After teaching and coaching at UHS for 18 years, he now oversees sports, physical education, nurses, allied health, and the ROTC divisions. With the transition of fall sports to winter sports, he and athletic trainers have their hands full. Zieser highlights the intricate preparations involved in transitioning from fall to winter sports, student athlete recognition, and ongoing improvements. The UHS sport division is gearing up for an exciting winter season, and here is what Zieser had to offer on the matter:

How do coaches and staff manage the switch over from fall to winter sports?

Our staff at Union High School have to prepare the sport venues and the transportation to and from them. Basketball and wrestling and compete in our facilities but swimming, bowling, and track must compete at other venues. In the fall all sports are on our fields and all competitions are here at Union High School.

Do the athletic trainers prepare any differently for winter sports in comparison to fall sports?

The athletic trainers have an extremely hard and important job during all our athletic seasons. Fall is their most difficult due to football being a physical contact sport and there are twice as many sports in the fall which spread our training staff pretty thin. They get to do more rehabilitation and off season training in the winter as well as working with our individual wrestling and basketball teams more one on one.

Is there any sport in particular that requires more intensive training/preparation for?

All sports at Union High School require extensive training and preparation and our student-athletes are in a program that has year-round training and strength and conditioning. Wrestling is a winter sport that requires the athlete to gain weight in a specific weight class and that could be difficult for some athletes, especially during the holiday period. Wrestlers must weigh in before every match and must meet the required weight to wrestle in that weight class.

Are there any special ongoing improvements to the sports department? (monetary, socially, etc)

The athletic department is updating facilities every year. For example. this past summer, a new turf field and track were installed. The athletic

Student Farmer Frontline

department will continue to name Athletes of the Month throughout the year. It is important to acknowledge our student-athletes and the great things they do in the classroom and athletics. Also, our Instagram page [unionhs_sports](#) is used to promote our athletic programs and the athletes participating in them.

Are there any events regarding the sports/athletics division at UHS that you want to highlight in our newsletter?

The start of our wrestling and basketball seasons [is] December 14th. You can find our schedule online at our district website.

UHS Appreciation Project

by Denae Johnson, Grade 12



UHS students writing notes for their peers for Random Act of Kindness Evening.

Headed by All In UHS, the UHS Appreciation Project took place over November and December. The UHS Appreciation Project included writing letters to every single UHS student. Mrs. Hall, the advisor of All In, knows the importance of making sure every student feels seen, and this shines in this project. The UHSPTA participated by holding a night where students, parents, and PTA members could come in and write notes to students and staff. The event was efficient and energetic, with over 2,800 notes being written. The project spanned multiple weeks of writing notes, staying after school, and students taking homerooms home to finish writing. Overall, the Appreciation Project was a rousing success. We all know how special a handwritten note can make you feel, and UHS students of all grades surely felt loved and appreciated receiving these notes in their

homerooms. Mrs. Hall plans to continue projects like this to boost school spirit and foster an environment of unity.

UHSPAC To Perform “Mean Girls” at Kean University

by Samantha Frederic, Grade 12

The UHSPAC is ecstatic to be performing their production of Mean Girls at Kean University. Kean continues to collaborate and support Union High School, offering its remarkable auditorium for events that showcase the immense talent of the Union community. The partnership between Union High School and Kean University has proven to be a valuable asset, providing a venue for performances such as Mean Girls and Union's Got Talent.

Union High School's Performing Arts Company expresses sincere appreciation for the generosity of Kean University. The opportunity to showcase their production in Kean's auditorium elevates the experience for both performers and audience members alike. The UHSPAC recognizes the significance and appreciates the chance to foster a sense of unity within the community.

Be sure to come out and watch Mean Girls on January 19th, 20th, and 21st at Kean University's Wilkins Theatre!



Students in last year's UHSPAC Spring Musical production of Mamma Mia.

Kawameeh JR National Honors Society Heads Thanksgiving Food Drive

by Ava Soares, Grade 10

Kawameeh Middle School's National Junior Honor Society recently came together to give back to the Union Community this Thanksgiving season. Directed by Ms. Diana Fasano, the kids came together and all donated enough goods to make 5 Thanksgiving baskets for local families. The

students aren't the only ones giving back, but the staff and faculty did so as well! The students mostly brought canned goods while the staff donated turkeys and pies for the baskets. It was a great experience and shows how Union is like a family in all the ways they like to give back to each other.

UHS Alumni Steal The Show!

by Isabella Beaumont, Grade 12

Every year on the fourth Thursday of November, families sit down to watch the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. This annual New York City parade started in 1942 and is known for its giant balloons, amazing talent, and colorful floats. The parade lasts around three hours and is watched by millions of people every year. This year, however, the Parade shined a little brighter than normal.

The 2023 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade had four alumni from Union High School and an additional former member of the UHS baton twirling team, Tiahna Selby. These alumni include Gianna Viola (Class of 2022), Kristodya Koduah (Class of 2022), Jeremiah Alviola (Class of 2023), and Jonathan Duvelson (Class of 2016). Viola is a former member of the UHSPAC, Koduah is a former member of the UHSPAC and UHS Color Guard, Alviola is a former member of the UHS Marching Band, and Duvelson is a former member of the UHSPAC.

Alviola, Viola, Selby, and Koduah were all in attendance as students of Rutgers University and members of the Marching Scarlet Knights. Each had different, valuable roles in Rutgers' performance throughout the parade, with Alviola playing trumpet, Viola performing with the dance team, Selby baton twirling, and Koduah performing with the color guard. Selby was also highlighted specifically during the parade as she led the Marching Scarlet Knights as a twirler during the parade.



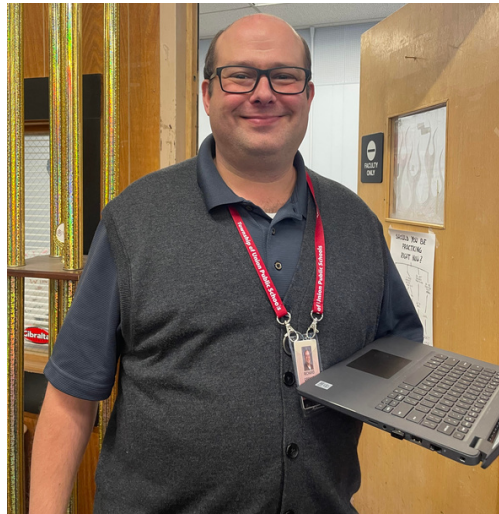
Rutgers Marching Band at Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade

Duvelson, who starred in multiple lead roles during his time with the UHSPAC, appeared as a performer during Broadway's segment of the parade. He recently made his debut in the Broadway musical Some Like It Hot, which will be running until December 30, 2023.

Union High School and the Township of Union are so proud of these former students! The spreading of their gifts and talents on the national stage is applauded and encouraged. We congratulate them on their amazing performances and hope to continue to see the sharing of their incredible skills in the future!

New Music Teacher: Dr. Richard Grennor Joins UHS Family!

by Angelina Kearny, Grade 12



Grennor can not wait to continue helping students "expand their musical horizons".

Dr. Richard Grennor became the new UHS instrumental music director in October. After spending most of his years working in Union elementary schools, he's "ecstatic" to be working with high school students as they "exhibit a greater level of dedication to their instruments and allow him to dive deeper into the teaching of music".

Grennor, who is a saxophonist by trade, has already made a huge impact on the music program within the few months he's been here. He has shifted to a more technical teaching style in the orchestra classes, implementing new technique workbooks to help with intonation and bowing.

Although the winter concert date is not official, Grennor has introduced new repertoire ranging from pop tunes to famous classical music for the potential show.

Editor's Note: First Student Farmer Frontline Issue!

by Angelyn Ansah, Grade 12

On behalf of the Student Farmer Frontline Committee, I would like to thank our readers for supporting us with "What's Up With TUPS?". Interim Superintendent Dr. Benaquista brought us together to help find ways in which we can promote the good across our schools, and Student Farmer Frontline plans to unpack and share all of the positive things going on around the Township of Union Public School District. In creating this first issue, we committed to communicating with staff and students across the schools to hear about "what's up" with our schools. The journey to present this issue took a lot of hard work, but I would like to congratulate everyone for our success in launching this project. Stay tuned for our next issue coming soon!

An update on Literacy from Interim Superintendent, Dr. Benaquista!

This year, part of our PD and PLCs are focusing on the Science of Reading for SPED and K-5 staff. In addition, we are piloting "MyView(Savvas)" and "Into Reading" (HMH) for K-5. Jefferson is conducting full year pilots and teachers are receiving ongoing PD and professional support. For Grade K-4, MyView(Savvas) and Into Reading (HMH) will be piloted this January. The pilot teachers will receive their introductory training at the 12/8 PD. Both programs are grounded in scientifically-based reading instruction designed (Science of Reading) to reach every learner and provide comprehensive, explicit, and systematic instruction in foundational literacy skills. The goal is to increase foundation reading skills in K-2 through explicit instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, and word study. Strengthening foundational skills in K-2 will promote success in advanced reading comprehension and higher-order thinking in 3-5. Furthermore, by adopting a common program for K-5, there will be better continuity for grade 5 to build on the skills from K-4, which will prepare students for the transition to the secondary grades.