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Eighth Graders “Retreat” at Camp Pioneer

On November 7th, we hosted our 15th Annual Retreat for the 8th Grade Leaders In Training teams. 106 students and adults came together to reconnect and focus on the commitment they have made as a Leader In Training.

This retreat gives the 8th grade teams a “jump start” to help get them thinking about furthering their commitment to community service. Students participated in several team building activities.



Our favorite is the “Web” challenge. Here, students use a ball of yarn, passing it to someone else in the group. Each time the ball is passed, they give an example of what makes them a good leader. For example: Leaders choose not to drink or use drugs; Leaders choose friends that don’t use; Leaders make good decisions and help others do the same! As the yarn gets passed throughout the group, we heard excellent and thoughtful ideas about what it means to be a great leader and we see how the “Web” keeps us all connected through a community effort to remain drug-free!



In preparation of their first “Community Service Project” of the year, students constructed felt blankets that are donated to the SPCA, Harvest House and local nursing homes to help keep everyone warm during these cold months.

The students chose the location to donate their blankets and wrote letters to the agency that received them. These projects are an excellent way for the students to spread their good will, use their talents and learn more about the importance of giving back to the community in which they live!

After these projects were completed, everyone gathered in the mess hall for grilled cheese and hot tomato soup - it was a wonderful end to a terrific day and we can’t wait to do it all again with next year’s 8th Grade Leaders In Training!

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**Drive Against Drugs Tournament
Our 9th Year was a little rainy!**

Once again, we hosted our Annual Drive Against Drugs at the beautiful East Aurora Country Club. This year, we met some big challenges (like rain, thunder and lightning!) This cut our day a bit short, allowing our supporters get only 8 holes in on the course.

Regardless of this setback, we were still successful in raising \$17,655 to support the Foundation. Much of this came from our amazing sponsors: WH Greene & Associates came on again as the Gold Sponsor; for several years in a row now - we could not do this event without them! New this year, M & T Bank increased their support and became a Silver Sponsor and West Herr came on board as the "Golf Cart Sponsor".

We have so many great friends in the community, and their love of golf helps us succeed at this event every August. We received donations from 56 restaurants, businesses and individual donors. Through the raffle and live auctions, these donations allowed us to raise more than \$5,300!

To all of our great friends and supporters in the community, we say thank you. Without your generosity and commitment, we could not be successful.

A great thank you is also deserved to our DAD Committee:
Committee Chair Jeff Pappalardo, Steven Barber, Alvino Battistoni, Michael Buczkowski, Joseph Ciffa, Linda Flowers, John Lunn, Howard Martin, Kevin Mulvey, Timothy Walsh and Scott Wander.

Thank you all for making this event so wonderful!!

THANK YOU TO OUR DAD SPONSORS!

The image displays a collection of logos for the event's sponsors. At the top left is the M&T Bank logo. To its right is the West Herr logo with 'NEW YORK' underneath. Further right is the W.H. Greene & Associates, Inc. logo, which includes a sun icon with a 'G' and the text 'Specialty Insurance Broker'. Below these are logos for d.POST, OW, RICH'S, and TraversCollins. The next row features Phillips Lytle LLP, Synergy, and RDIAR LOGISTICS. Below that are logos for FSE FOOD SERVICE ENABLERS, BISON BAG COMPANY, INC., ChiampouTravis Besaw & Kershner LLP (CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS & CONSULTANTS), and John Lunn & Associates Ltd. The bottom row includes SGROI FINANCIAL, RUPP, BAASE, PFALZGRAF, CUNNINGHAM & COPPOLA LLC (Attorneys at Law), and KeyBank.

Festival of Lights Hosts Drug Free Art & Poetry Winners Throughout December, drug-free artists and poets are displayed!

Every year, we have the honor of putting out the call to Kindergarten through 12th grade artists and poets to submit original drug-free work. The collections of work we receive highlight each students' commitment to remain drug free and some also feature their drug-free role model.



This year, we received more than 500 pieces from 17 schools, community centers and even individuals that entered the contest on their own. Each piece is judged by professional artists on a scale using "Creativity", "Craftsmanship & Skill" and "Clarity of a Drug-Free Message". From there, winners are chosen in the Kindergarten - 4th grade, 5th - 8th grade and 9th - 12th grade categories. In addition to these 18 winners, 25 pieces were chosen as Honorable Mentions. The judges came from the creative teams at Crowley Webb & Travers Collins - Thank you all!



Students came from all over WNY, but several of the winners were from schools in the Southern Tier - with many coming out of AJ Schmidt Elementary school in the Lake Shore district. We were so proud to honor these students on December 6th in front of teachers, family, community members and press at the Erie County Fairgrounds!

New this year, each winning piece and honorable mention will remain on display at the Erie County Fairgrounds during their Festival of Lights for the entire month of December - where more than 30,000 people are expected to visit and enjoy!

The opportunity to display these works at the Festival came from our partnership, that started with the fairgrounds in 2012, to display the "Drive Safe Tree." The tree is on display again this year, showcasing hundreds of hand-colored ornaments; each representing a child's wish that their parent makes safe choices and travels safely.



The Art and Poetry Contest is made possible through a generous sponsorship by Evans Bank. This year, Evans supported the contest not only through their funding, but also with Howard Martin (VP of Information Technology) and Kevin Brady (VP of Marketing) - who helped us honor the winning students at the press event on December 6th. Mr. Martin presented WNY United with a \$3,000 check and handed out each of the awards to the winners!

In front of the 150 guests, several speakers came forward to say a few words about the importance of working hard together to combat substance abuse, like Matt Smith Executive Director of Preventionfocus. Legislator Lynne Dixon's office sent Jessica O'Neil to give the kids special Erie County Legislature Achievement Certificates!

Dave Gordon, of Dave's Christmas Wonderland and Gordon Companies Inc., also joined us and generously donated a brand new 15ft tall pre-lit tree for our 2014 display! Even though the tree won't be on display this year, he wanted to be there to show his support for our work. Thank you, Mr. Gordon, for your generosity and support!

We are so grateful for the tremendous support we receive everyday!

A special thank you must go out to the teachers that sent in their students works! And of course, to the students that received Honorable Mentions:

Poetry: (K - 4 category) Jack Harrington, Carissa Kerkendall & Susanne McCool.
(5 - 8 category) Nilda Caliz, Meryn Miller & Emma Rinn. (9 - 12 category) Serena Farrell, Maura McHugh & Kianna Norman.

Art: (K - 4 category) Zoe LaPress, Kailee Licht, Brandynn Robinson, Ariana Rose, Hunter Runser, Jordan Stephan & Elijah Young. (5 - 8 category) Caleb Kennedy, Luke Lester, Garion Lopez, Tyler Roy, Anthony Sterling, Collin Utley & Aziz Wright.
(9 - 12 category) Jaclyn Draschan & Elizabeth Maguder

Thank you to the artists & poets for sharing your beautiful work with us. The winners are listed on the following pages and you can see photographs of all the winning pieces and honorable mentions on our facebook page.



Sheriff Timothy Howard spoke about celebrating a kickoff to 3d Month (National Drunk & Drugged Driving Prevention Month) with the holiday billboard; and was joined at the podium by Captain Mike Licata, Major Michael Ceretto and other NYS Troopers and Lt. James Koch from the Hamburg Police Department.

Congratulations to all of the “Drug Free New Year” Poetry Winners!

Kindergarten - 4th Grade



**1st Place:
Sofia Chandler**



**2nd Place:
Madison Broadus**



**3rd Place:
Jacob Torres**

5th - 8th Grade



**1st Place:
Cheyenne Hahn**



**2nd Place:
Carlos Diaz**



**3rd Place:
Emily Hyna**

9th - 12th Grade



**1st Place:
David Pachla**



**2nd Place:
MaryElisabeth Rustowicz**



**3rd Place:
Emily Kerl**

We regret that we were unable to reprint the poems in this issue, due to space. Visit our facebook page to view all of these beautiful poems and high resolution photos of the artwork! And don't forget to visit the Art & Poetry area at the Festival of Lights on the Hamburg Fairgrounds; these winning pieces will be displayed for the entire month of December!

WNY United Honors and Congratulates the “Drug Free New Year” Art Winners!

Kindergarten - 4th Grade



1st Place:
Jesse Gryczkowski



2nd Place:
Benjamin Maurer



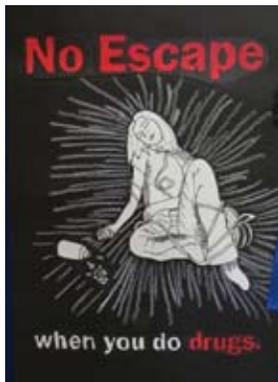
3rd Place:
Ella Wierzba



5th - 8th Grade



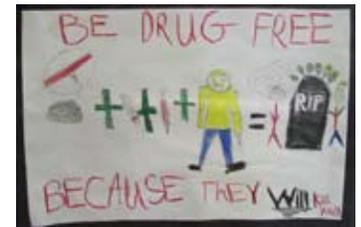
1st Place:
Emma Rice



2nd Place:
Amber Newman



3rd Place:
John Kader



9th - 12th Grade



1st Place:
YaXin (May) Ren



2nd Place:
Mulin Chen



3rd Place:
Justine Chiavetta

The John R. Oishei Foundation funds pilot phase of Ripple Effect Program

We are proud to announce new funding support from The John R. Oishei Foundation for a partnership with the Mental Health Association of Erie County. Together, WNY United and the MHA will pilot test "Ripple Effects", a secondary intervention tool designed to offer added support to students in second through fifth grade.

Beginning in January, a Ripple Effects Coach will begin working with students at Hillery Park Elementary School #27. MHA and WNY United will work side by side with the Student Support Team at #27 to identify students in need and offer them targeted and individualized tutorials to support their behavioral and academic needs.

The preliminary phase of this program begins in January 2014 and runs through June, where 25 students are targeted for enrollment in Ripple Effects. Student numbers increase to 100 in the fall of 2014. Students will be pre and post-tested to determine changes and program component effectiveness.

WNY United is honored to have been awarded this funding and to share it with such a wonderful partner as the Mental Health Association of Erie County!

"The John R. Oishei Foundation strives to be a catalyst for change to enhance economic vitality and quality of life for the Buffalo Niagara region through grantmaking, leadership and network building. The Foundation was established in 1940 by John R. Oishei, founder of Trico Products Corporation."

Red Ribbon Week Honors A Great Man! Banners, a rally and excellent support from the community!

Every year in October, we work extra hard with our school partners to raise awareness about the importance of working together as a community to battle substance abuse. This year, October 23rd - 31st was the 28th year of National Red Ribbon Week. This week is used to draw even more attention to the dangers of substance abuse and to honor a fallen hero, Enrique Camarena.



Here at WNY United, Red Ribbon Week offers us the chance to partner with our schools on another project that will further raise awareness to the dangers our kids face everyday.

This year, on Wednesday's "Take a Stand" day, we hosted our annual Red Ribbon Rally in South Park High School's auditorium. Thanks to Principal Terry Schuta, we were able to stay out of the rain and have a great rally in the morning! In the afternoon, we helped West Side Community Services to host their annual Red Ribbon Rally and (new this year) a door decorating contest.

The events that take place throughout the week allow students from all over to participate in their own commitments to remaining drug-free and to highlight the message that "A Healthy Me is Drug Free!"

First Night Buffalo - 25 Years!

This year marks the 25th anniversary to "Buffalo's Biggest Drug & Alcohol-Free Celebration"! Each year, the Independent Health Foundation puts on this amazing event on New Year's Eve at the Buffalo Convention Center for families to attend a safe and healthy drug and alcohol-free event!



Our own Beth Anzalone was invited to the press conference on December 6th to carry on our involvement with the event that we proudly brought to Buffalo in 1988. Beth was excited to help deliver the important message that there are activities available to families that counteract the tradition of drinking and driving on December 31st.

We are excited that the winning Red Ribbon Banners will be on display, along with a photograph of the LIT teams that created them, in the Convention Center for the evening's festivities!

Another Great Success at the Erie County Fair

Thousands of Fairgoers helped us to raise more than \$9,000!!

For nineteen years, WYRK has partnered with us to donate the Slade Park Gazebo for our use as a fund (and awareness) raising effort. This opportunity affords us the chance to reach out to thousands of WNY-ers over twelve days of wheel spinning and prize giving. We could not be more grateful for this partnership and generosity by WYRK! The money raised here are 'unrestricted dollars' that are put toward our Academic Mentoring Programming and our Summer Leaders in Training - helping us to reach more than 400 students with one-on-one support!

During our days at the Fair, we invite folks to come over and "Spin & Win" for a \$1 donation. Everyone walks away with a prize - anything from a New Era Baseball Cap, a local restaurant gift certificate, a toy or game, Bisons Baseball tickets or the chance to win our raffle - terrific Buffalo Bills Gear! More than 45 restaurants, stores and local businesses donated gift certificates and products!



Bills Raffle Winner lives in New Jersey, but Patrick has "Buffalo Blood!"



The Buffalo Bills Raffle took place on the last day of the Fair, where more than 700 tickets had been entered throughout our time there. We were so happy to have pulled the ticket of **Patrick Prendergast**, a fifth grade student who lives in East Windsor, New Jersey. Patrick, though a New Jersey resident, has "Buffalo Blood" and was absolutely thrilled to get his winnings in the mail! He was very excited to be able to wear his Bills Gear while they cheer on all of his favorite teams (all Buffalo teams!) Congratulations Patrick!!

A Big Thank You to our Board Members and Community Friends that helped us during the Fair this year - we simply couldn't do it without you! Our Staff members deserve a lot of credit, for they are the ones that make sure our message gets out there and the money comes in!

Thank you to our volunteers: From our Boards of Directors Steven Barber & his family; Sarah, Tommy, Tate, Ty & Tess; and Mary Lou Montanari. Our community friends Dan Lawicki, Christine & Ricky Mann; and Diana Ordines. Our Staff Members: Denise Bitar, Sue Boyle (and her family!), Lori Brown, Don Burch, Jen Calderon, Kathy Deet, Sarah Holsopple, Becky Krebs, Julie McCarthy, Steve Steifer & Samantha Zappala.

Babies, Retirement & Weddings - Oh My!

This year at WNY United, we saw a lot of changes. We said hello to new faces, goodbye to long-time friends and ushered in a few flowers and baby bibs!

Kathy Deet, Administrative Assistant here at WNY United for eleven years, said so long and entered into a well-earned retirement. We are sad to see Kathy leave, but proud of her work here and so happy that she can spend more time with her family and enjoy life!! We say Good Luck to our great friend!!

Prevention Specialist, Sarah Holsopple and her husband Jared expanded their family, with the introduction of Miss Sadie Lynn on October 25th. Our Accountant, Don Burch and his wife Erin also added to their pack; welcoming a son, Camden Brooks on June 21st and making daughter Mackenzie a brand new big sister! Looking beautiful in white, Prevention Specialist Jen Calderon tied the knot with her beau Patrick McMahon on October 12th!

We also said good luck to Denise Bitar on her new journey as a teacher in the Buffalo Public School System. After three years, we certainly don't want her to go but we are proud to have had the chance to know her and have her here! Lindsey Johns also headed out on her new path in East Aurora - we wish her luck as well on her new journey!

We also welcomed some new highly qualified Prevention Specialists on staff to our lair...

Steven Stiefer, coming to us by way of Germany and NYC working as an English teacher and online tutor; Katie Bone, was a Special Education teacher out of state and the Center Director of Huntington Learning Center in Kenmore, Rachel Daws, who was originally a Mentor for the MAS program at School 93, each came on board as Prevention Specialists at our partner schools! Kassi Husband was also a MAS tutor at 95 before taking over there while Sarah is on maternity leave - but she'll be back to take over for Denise at Cleve-Hill in the fall!

Tom Kulaszewski, a recently retired board member, has also joined our staff to assist with many functions around the office.

We are so excited for all of these new changes—2014 promises to be a terrific year!



WNY UNITED

Against Drug & Alcohol Abuse, Inc.

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LIT at #39 and #80 Raise Money to Support American Diabetes Walk!



On October 24, 2013, LIT teams from School #39 Martin Luther King Multicultural Institute (led by Prevention Specialist Jen Calderon) and School #80 Highgate Heights (led by Prevention Specialist Lori Brown), participated in the American Diabetes Walk at Johnnie B. Wiley Stadium. This was the culminating event of fundraising done by these teams. The teams raised awareness about diabetes with a "Fact-A-Day" on their school's announcements and collected **\$273** to donate for research. The students were proud to present a check to two American Diabetes Association representatives at the walk.

Who are we? WNY United Against Drug & Alcohol Abuse, Inc. is a grass roots initiative designed to increase awareness, educate & mobilize area residents to participate actively in proven strategies to prevent substance abuse. We actively promote healthy choices. Funded by the New York State Office of Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Services through the Erie County Department of Mental Health. Additional funds provided by the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County, the Rich Family Foundation, the John R. Oishei Foundation, the WNY United Foundation, the Erie County Youth Bureau & private contributions. Member of Px20, the Erie County Prevention Alliance.

WNY United Digest is published tri-annually. We encourage community members to submit important dates and story ideas!
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