



SLEF Newsletter

Spring 2021

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Greetings!

As I write my first letter to our community, I come to you as a parent of two SLCS students, an eight-year resident of Lyon Township, a business owner and volunteer. Like many of you, this year has brought us many challenges. I truly believe every challenge can offer a new opportunity and the possibility for growth.

SLEF did its best to rise to the challenges that this year posed, and we were able to make more of an impact than ever before. Looking back on the 2020-2021 school year, I ask myself, how did we pull this off? The answer is pretty simple—a passionate board and a giving community. When the foundation asked for donations to help our teachers and students navigate through a pandemic, you delivered. Our community allowed us to provide technology resources to students who did not have reliable resources. Every elementary school benefited from a \$500 donation to purchase in-person, safe and fun playground equipment. Over 50 teachers were approved for micro-grants to help cover the cost of items to enhance the classroom experience. Most recently, we are excited to offer financial support for our third social emotional learning dog for South Lyon Community Schools. This month we will honor two seniors with the Perseverance Award and offer face coverings to every senior at SLHS an

SL East to wear at graduation. In the summer, we will welcome 700 incoming Kindergartners with a 'Welcome to Kindergarten' bag, filled with essential items to help promote learning and creativity. Next year, we have a hefty goal of funding two additional social emotional learning dogs in addition to our other programs.

Looking forward, my goal is to continue to engage with the community and build relationships. We look forward to planning safe fundraisers and participating in events like Pumpkinfest and the Farmers Market. Stop by, get to know us a little better and allow me the privilege to get to know you. In the meantime, enjoy our first newsletter as you get to know SLEF.

Sincerely,
Michelle Tomei

WELCOME TO KINDERGARTEN BAGS!

Want to be part of welcoming our newest members to the South Lyon school district? Your donation will help support the purchase of over 700 bags and essential learning and literacy items going to all incoming kindergartners. Do you have a local business you want to advertise? You can advertise and include a flyer in the bag! Reach out to chair@sleffoundation.org to sponsor or include your flyer. More information on sponsorship items and donations can be made on the website [here](#).





SL Teachers Going Above & Beyond: The Baking Club's World Record Attempt

If there was a world record for AWESOME, Sara Gage and Rebecca Mann would definitely be in the running.

Their recipe for AWESOME is simple and successful:

2 middle school teachers who go above and beyond for their schools.

250 students who want to safely and socially connect with others while creating deliciousness.

A cup of organization.

A dash of creativity.

A heaping helping of heart.

In a year of uncertainty, these two middle school teachers cooked up an idea that has succeeded beyond all expectations. And not only have they started up The Baking Club – a highly-successful extracurricular activity for Centennial and Millennium middle school students – they soon may be showing the whole world what they can do. On June 9, they're attempting to break the Guinness Book of World Records for the largest virtual cooking class.

The Baking Club all started with a conversation about a celebration the teachers worried they couldn't have this year.

"We used to have a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports celebration (PBIS) where students earned the opportunity to celebrate for one hour by participating in a teacher-led activity," said Mrs. Gage. "We used to host the Fondant room, where we taught students how to make fondant ... We realized this year that there was a high chance this celebration would not happen and we thought of teaching students virtually how to make fondant. That gave us the idea to start the club."

First: fondant. Next: the world.

At the beginning of the school year, Mrs. Gage said they expected about 50 students to be interested in joining The Baking Club and planned to only run it during the first semester. But now, about 250 students from both middle schools (and sometimes other teachers!) participate, and The Baking Club has been extended into second semester with additional classes and a World Record Attempt. Together, the students have prepared pies, breads, cinnamon rolls and more.

For Mrs. Gage, baking has always been a joy. As a child, some of her fondest memories come from baking with her grandmothers, both of whom immigrated from Italy and spoke limited English, so verbal communication could be challenging at times. She said the baking "created a language of its own that only brought us closer together."

Ms. Mann agrees: "I have also always enjoyed baking. Growing up, my mom and I always made cookies, cakes and pies together."

Sixth-grader Claire Porinsky joined Baking Club to learn new skills in a fun environment.

"Kneading dough was a challenge for me, and my hands were very gloopy, but I was able to try something new," she said. "Another one of my favorite parts about Baking Club is probably being on a Meet with so many other people; some people you



recognize, others are unfamiliar faces. Experiencing baking with so many people is quite fun, and often their struggles and strengths are the same that you have. I always look forward to Baking Club!"

For South Lyon students of all ages (elementary – high school) interested in participating in the World Record Attempt, there is still time to join. Please contact Jennifer Jones-Times (jonestimsj@slcs.us) for an electronic copy of the permission slip needed to participate, and Mrs. Gage (bernardis@slcs.us) if you have any questions. Paperwork must be turned in by May 26 in order to be able to bake for the record.

Mrs. Gage & Ms. Mann's FAVORITE BAKING CLUB RECIPE: BANANA BREAD

In a Microwave safe bowl, melt $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of butter.

Add 1 cup of sugar, 1 egg and 1 teaspoon of vanilla and whisk together

Add 3 mashed bananas and stir

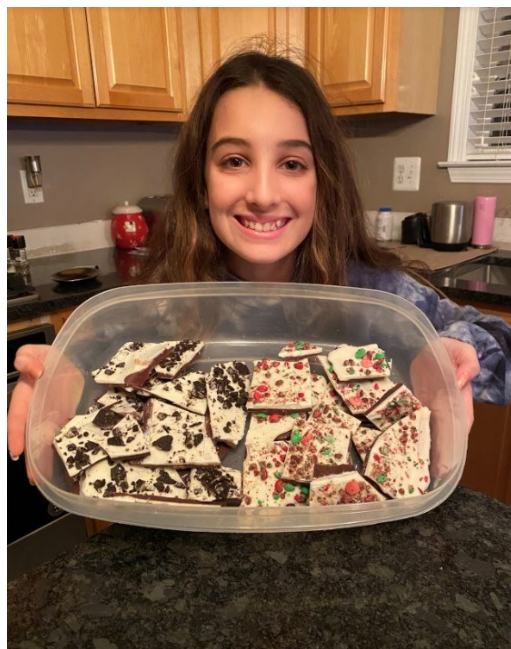
In a separate bowl mix - 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of flour and 1 teaspoon of baking soda

Fold the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients bowl

Spray the bread pan and add dough

Bake for 350 degrees for 45-55 minutes*

*Cooking times may vary



Amidst a Pandemic, High School Therapy Dogs Begin Their Work

By Angeliah Van Amberg

SLHS Student Journalist, *Lyon Life*



Teens have finally begun walking through the halls this year, and as always they are searching for their friends and classes. Among them is a new face, but it's not a new staff member or student. Instead, it is a dog named Olive.

Olive is an English Lab who comes to South Lyon East High School each day to bring smiles and support to the students. Olive is a therapy dog that has been brought to East through the work of school counselor Ms. Katey White.

"Obtaining a therapy dog in the school was Ms. Katey White's genius hour project for the 19-20 school year," school social worker Ms. Thelen-Eberhart explained enthusiastically. "Ms. White modeled our program after Brighton Schools."

White had researched how successful Brighton's therapy dog program was and thought it would be a good idea to recreate the idea at South Lyon schools.

She then brought her idea to the school board and used donations from families and organizations like the South Lyon Education Foundation to help acquire enough funds to bring a dog to East. Olive's food and vet care is bought with donations as well, and she ultimately is owned by the school- not any individual.

"There is research regarding the benefits of having therapy dogs in schools," Ms. Thelen-Eberhart says. "Some students come to school just to see Olive."

Her name was decided amongst student council and staff and is actually symbolic. Partly, it is a nod to former student Trevon Tyler whose football number was 54. In Roman numerals, 54 is LIV. Also, the symbolism of an olive branch stood out as a nice connection to what many hoped having a therapy dog would encapsulate. Finally, most just liked the sound of it.



Olive brings many benefits to the school environment. Whenever a student is anxious, Olive helps calm them down and bring their mood up. "When I get anxious, I scratch my skin so having Olive helps," sophomore Ayana Ihara explains.

Olive has spent the semester adjusting to being inside the school full-time with students. Due to COVID, she missed a lot of these opportunities in the Fall. She will be two-years-old this June. If you haven't met her yet, Olive has a shy personality but like most dogs, loves being pet.

Most of the time, Olive is located in Student Services but can also be found in the Main Office or walking through the school visiting other classrooms. She regularly attends the 6th hour Social Communication class.

Ready to Volunteer?

SLEF can use your help!

Looking for volunteers to assist as treasurer, secretary, as well as fundraising and event planning. If interested please email chair@sleffoundation.org

SLEF Delivers Teacher Micro Grants

By Emma Klotz

CMS Student Journalist, *The Charger Press*

The South Lyon Educational Foundation (SLEF) is an organization that helps out students and staff. Recently, the SLEF gave teachers an opportunity to apply for a micro-grant of up to one hundred dollars to use to purchase things to enhance students' learning. I interviewed two teachers at my school (Centennial Middle School) who applied.

One teacher to apply for the micro-grant was Mrs. Thomas, a sixth and seventh grade English language arts teacher. When asked what she used the South Lyon Educational Foundation micro-grant money for, she replied, "I bought brand new copies of the book I use for our upcoming novel unit." Mrs. Thomas also stated that, "Because of Covid, students need to have their own copy of the book, and can no longer share materials, like they have in the past, so I purchased some more. Now, every student will be able to have their own copy while we read in class." Mrs. Thomas was able to purchase 25 more books for her classroom. As a student in one of Mrs. Thomas's classes, it has been really nice for everyone to be able to read their own copy of the book. We are all enjoying reading *Pictures of Hollis Woods* in class.

The second teacher to apply for the micro-grant at Centennial Middle School was Mr. Braun, a seventh-grade world language survey teacher, and an eighth-grade Spanish teacher. I asked him some questions about the SLEF micro-grant. After I asked what he used the SLEF micro-grant money for in his classroom, he replied, "I used the grant to purchase some culturally-authentic decorations from Hispanic cultures." These include pictures from around the Spanish-speaking world, and culture cards with information about Spanish-speaking countries. I also purchased some posters with key Spanish phrases to help out students that might not remember how to perform important language functions, such as asking to use the restroom during class."

The purchase helped enhance Mr. Braun's classroom because he wanted to "inject as much culture as possible into the Spanish program at CMS." Mr. Braun also said that "one of the simplest and easiest ways is to provide daily visuals for students to look at and make them feel like they're entering a Spanish-speaking place every time they set foot into the classroom. The décor that the SLEF grant purchased for me adds color, personality, and a more authentic Spanish-speaking culture to my classroom." I am also a student in Mr. Braun's class and I think that it is a super fun and great way to incorporate some decorations of the Spanish culture in the classroom. I also asked Mr. Braun about what it means to him for having the opportunity to apply for the SLEF micro-grant, and he replied saying that, "It means the world to know that members of the community care enough about our kids to provide funds like these to our teachers. It sounds like a small thing- purchasing a bunch of posters for a teacher- but the people who ultimately benefit from this generosity are the students who get experience them every day!"

The SLEF has done a great job supporting the students and staff of South Lyon. I know that these two teachers and more are very thankful!



SLEF is proud to support academic needs and awesome teachers like Mr. Murphy, who recently applied for a micro-grant to expand his classroom library at SLHS.

He writes: "My books have arrived, and I've added them into my bookshelf library. I've already given out a few of the copies to students for their reading, and they are very excited about it ... THANK YOU so much for your support of student reading. I know that more students will be reading and enjoying the books because of your support. I truly appreciate it!"

SLEF appreciates you, Mr. Murphy, and everything you do for our kids!



Perseverance Scholarships Awarded to Two Remarkable Seniors

SLEF is pleased to announce the 2021 recipients of the Perseverance Award, Grace VanBoven and Joselyn Cadicamo. These truly deserving South Lyon students each received the \$1,000 award. The two recipients' inspired essays brought tears to the eyes of our scholarship committee. SLEF wishes Grace and Josie all the best in their future academic pursuits.



**Josie Cadicamo,
SLEHS Senior**

Josie truly persevered throughout her very serious mental health challenges. During her freshman year, she lost five people close to her in a five-month period while struggling to adjust to high school life. This traumatizing loss and the grief that accompanied it resulted in overwhelming feelings. She recognized that

she needed help, which she received, and she is now motivated to manage her mental illness and the challenges that come as a university student. Josie wrote, "Through all the obstacles I have learned to enjoy the little things, that progress is progress no matter how 'small,' and that I need to stop surviving and start fighting. I also learned that worrying about every little detail gets me nowhere and I need to relax and let life do its thing."

Josie has participated in NHS, student council, L.E.A.D., thespian board, and she has been a stage manager and a part of the student leadership team of her youth group. She works two jobs at Target and in the childcare area of her church. She also has excelled academically.

Josie is currently considering whether she'll attend the University of Alabama or a local community college in the fall. Good luck, Josie!



**Grace VanBoven,
SLHS Senior**

The loss of a parent is a loss like no other for a child. At the young age of 9, Grace lost her mom to breast cancer. During her mom's fight, Grace's goal was to not be a burden on anyone else and to pretend that everything was okay. "The priority needed to be mom getting better, not

me struggling with the idea of losing her" wrote Grace. She continues to struggle with knowing that she is enough for herself and her mom. In her words, "Mature might be the best fitting word I chose, and as much as I want to give myself this credit for this trait, it's all thanks to my mom. When she got sick, I immediately switched from being a kid to being mature."

Grace has been a member of LINK crew and the student council, while achieving scholastic excellence. She works at Dick's Sporting Goods, and she will be paying for her own education. Grace's future goals include earning a degree in biology and business and continuing her post-graduate education by attending medical school. She will be attending the University of Michigan in the fall. Good luck, Grace!

**COME VISIT SLEF!
SOUTH LYON FARMERS MARKET
JUNE 26TH
KIDS DAY!!**



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