



# POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PIRATE POST

A Publication of Potential Development - School for Students with Autism

## FROM THE CEO



**Paul Garchar, Jr.**

We are excited to welcome everyone back for the new school year! This message marks our first newsletter of the 2024-2025 academic year.

The past year has been one of tremendous growth and we are proud to share that our enrollment has hit an all-time high of 329 students. Let's give a warm PD welcome to our newest Pirates and their families. In preparation for this growth, we have been hard at work over the summer break repurposing space and adding classrooms to better accommodate all students and staff.

Beyond our strong academics and life skills programs, we also continue to invest in extracurricular opportunities ensuring that students can discover their talents and passions while having fun and making friends.

In closing, we appreciate your patience as we navigate the first few weeks of this new year, especially during drop-off and pick-up times. Our number one priority is the safety of our students, and we are committed to making this a smooth and safe start to the new year. A new school year brings hopes and plans, as well as a fresh vision for all that we wish to accomplish. As we look to the future, we know that 2024-2025 will be our best year yet! GO PIRATES!!

## SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Our Special Olympics teams at PD have had an exciting year participating in basketball, bowling, pep club activities, track & field, and eSports. Thanks to generous funding, we were able to support our athletes by purchasing cheerleading and track & field uniforms, new sling bags, a large event tent, and so much more!

To celebrate their achievements, we hosted a special Sports Banquet where we honored our athletes and our participants in the YSU English Festival. It has been a rewarding year filled with dedication, teamwork, and success, and we look forward to continuing to support and cheer on our Special Olympics teams in the future.



## FACILITY UPDATE

This past year we welcomed close to thirty new students, which meant opening new classrooms in all three buildings. Additionally, a life skills lab was opened at the elementary/middle school and a clothing boutique launched at the high school.



## ALUMNI NEWS

This year, PD celebrates the graduation of 14 high school students, bringing our alumni total to 94. To strengthen community ties, we launched an Alumni Group, fostering connections and encouraging participation in alumni events and volunteering. We look forward to seeing our alumni thrive and contribute to the PD community in meaningful ways.



## PRESCHOOL UPDATE



**Kim MacDonald**

Program Coordinator  
Preschool

This year has been filled with wonderful milestones and achievements. We welcomed new staff members, which allowed us to enroll several new students. We proudly graduated 21 students this spring.

We are also bidding a fond farewell to Ms. Angela, who is retiring after 44 years of teaching, with her last 10 years being here at PD. Her dedication and impact on our community will be deeply missed.

Last year, we received a grant to enhance our playground. We added new equipment, including chalkboard flowers, musical instruments, and a picnic table, creating a more engaging and fun environment for our students.

We are excited to see what the next school year will bring and look forward to more wonderful experiences and achievements.



## ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE SCHOOL UPDATE



**Holly Hahn**

Program Coordinator  
E/M School

This year, we proudly opened a Life Skills room where students were introduced to essential cooking and basic kitchen skills. Each week they followed recipes, gathered ingredients, and used measuring tools and kitchen appliances. The students also practiced important social skills like turn-taking and positive peer interactions. Their favorite part was undoubtedly enjoying the delicious results of their hard work.

Miss Sam and Miss Raya's classes visited Noah's Lost Ark, where students fed animals, petted miniature horses, and had a picnic lunch. Curt Spivey from Ward Beecher Planetarium gave a solar eclipse presentation, where students participated in a hands-on activity and asked curious questions.

These and other enriching experiences made for a year full of learning, growth, and memorable moments.





# HIGH SCHOOL UPDATE

As we reflect on the past year, we are thrilled to share our students' many achievements and memorable experiences. They enjoyed activities like bowling, basketball, track, pep club, ESports team practice, and Art Therapy groups. Our students participated in the YSU English Festival - winning accolades, and benefited from educational visits by the Police and Fire Departments. Gym and swim sessions at the Jewish Community Center assisted with teaching them physical fitness and how to live a healthy lifestyle.

The prom was a spectacular event. Our students showcased their talents in the talent show, art shows, and karaoke nights. We also proudly restarted the Interact Club, encouraging community service and leadership. It has been a remarkable year filled with growth, learning, and joy. We are incredibly proud of our student's achievements and look forward to supporting their development in the coming year.



**Katie Petridis**  
Program Coordinator  
High School



# A HUGE THANK YOU TO OUR INCREDIBLE SUPPORTERS!

We want to extend our deepest gratitude to our amazing board members, dedicated staff, wonderful families, enthusiastic PD Promise Partners, and all the generous businesses throughout the Valley who rallied behind our 2023-2024 fundraising events. Your unwavering support helped make this a truly record-breaking year!

From the sold-out Bill Roux Memorial Golf Outing, Mahoning Valley Trivia With A Twist, and Mahoning Valley Pizza Cook-Off to our thrilling third-party events like Panera's Pieces of Hope for Autism Tulip Shortbread Cookie Campaign, Shoot for a Change Basketball Game, Batter Up for Autism Softball Tournament, and Birdfish Brewery's Pours for Potential, the energy and enthusiasm from our community were nothing short of spectacular.

We can't wait to build on this momentum and make next year unforgettable! We look forward to partnering with you and all our incredible community supporters for another exciting year of fun, growth, and success!





# COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND PHILANTHROPY

## ELEVATE POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Potential Development appreciates a passionate community of supporters ranging from individuals who provide specific gifts, to corporations and foundations that allow PD to undertake significant projects. Various giving levels provide numerous ways to support, including PD Promise and PD 100 opportunities.

Gifts to our school support student access to education and therapy services, enriching opportunities like field trips, athletics, extracurricular activities, and help to sustain our school into the future.

If you are interested in learning more about how to support Potential Development, please contact Crissi Jenkins, Chief Growth Officer at [crissi@potentialdevelopment.org](mailto:crissi@potentialdevelopment.org)



**Platinum Partners**



### COMPCO





**Gold Partners**









**Silver Partners**





**Bronze Partners**









### FOLLOW US



@potentialdevelopment

News and events are available at:  
[www.potentialdevelopment.org](http://www.potentialdevelopment.org)

**PTO**  Welcomes You  
to the PD Pirate Family!

### JOIN PTO TODAY!

**WHAT WE DO:**

The PTO is FREE TO JOIN and is dedicated to supporting our school community through various activities and initiatives, including:

- Providing school spirit gear
- Organizing staff appreciation events
- Preparing for holiday celebrations
- Fundraisers
- And much more!

**WHEN AND WHERE:**

- The PTO meets every 3rd Wednesday of the month at 8:30 am.
- Meeting location varies throughout the year.

*Join us at our next meeting to get involved and make a difference!  
Visit [potentialdevelopment.org](http://potentialdevelopment.org) to learn more!*