



Volume 14, Issue 117 November 2023

Serving the communities of Amherst, Amherst Twp., Birmingham, Brownhelm Twp., Camden Twp., Florence Twp, Henrietta Twp., Kipton Village, New Russia Twp., South Amherst Village, Vermilion and Vermilion Twp.

FFA Horse Judging Team Places 4th Nationally



Pictured above: Marshall Ternes, Jolee Wissinger, Ava Fontaine, and Jordyn Simpson.

At the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, the Firelands Horse Judging CDE Team placed 4th nationwide. They had placed 1st in Ohio last spring which qualified them for nationals. This gold rated team took 4th place out of 47 teams from other states and Puerto Rico. Congratulations to Marshall Ternes, Jolee Wissinger, Ava Fontaine, and Jordyn Simpson!

The National FFA Horse Evaluation career development event (CDE) is a competitive event that tests students' ability to select and evaluate horses. Event components include eight selection classes consisting of four halter classes and four performance classes. Students also give four sets of oral reasons with two sets coming from each evaluation class. Teams also work together to complete practical activities and a team presentation. Each team competed at local and state levels for the privilege of representing their state at the National FFA Convention & Expo. The event is one of many educational activities at the national convention in which FFA members apply classroom knowledge to real-life situations.

This is just one of the many CDEs that FFA students are involved in. The Firelands FFA program is led by Mrs. Shanna Finnegan and Mrs. Shelby McCarty.

4th Graders Honor Veterans with Special Program

4th grade students presented their annual Veterans Day program for their special guests on November 10th. The students invited veterans to be recognized and honored at FES during the performance.

Those in attendance were seated in chairs that were draped in white and tied with red or blue bows. Mums adorned with flags were placed in the hallways and around the seating area. The teachers and students decorated the gymnasium and hallways to add to the show of support for the invited special guests.

Our students worked with their teachers to gain a better understanding of the sacrifices that were made on behalf of the citizens of the United States. During the presentation, the students sang an opening piece that thanked the veterans for their services. From there, selected groups recited important information about Veterans Day and about life dedicated to service.

Principal Choe, the emcee of the event, read information about all the invited guests. 40 veterans were recognized at the program.

continued on page 7









You may view this issue online at: www.firelandsschools.org

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FHS Artists Exhibit in 41st Annual Lorain County Show

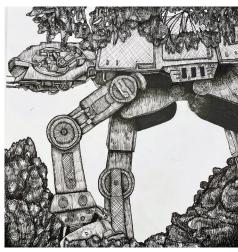
Ten Art students are honored with selection for the 41st annual 2023 Lorain County High School Exhibition. This annual exhibition, organized by the Educational Service Center



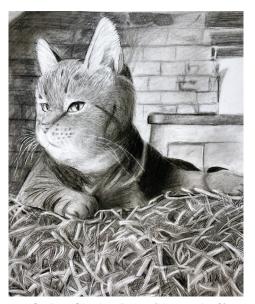
"Cubescape" by Bailey Knoble (Art 1)

"Pocky" by Apollo Winfield (Art 2)

and hosted at the Elyria West River Branch Library, invites participants from all high schools in Lorain County. Eleven high schools entered over 120 works that fill the circulation atrium of



"Galaxy" by Maddie Holland (Honors Art 4)



'Cat" by Charlee Polen (Honors Art 3)



"Duomo" by Mia Streby (Honors Art 4)

the library. Works range from drawing, painting, mixed media, wood and ceramic sculpture and more. This is the first finished work of the school year and a preview of what's to come in



"Jazz" by Mandy DeWitt (Honors Art 4)



"Snickers" by Mia Lopez (Honors Art 3)

other regional exhibitions. The exhibition ran from October 31 to November 17. Congratulations to all who were

selected to participate!

submitted by Mrs. Laura Tawil FHS Art Teacher

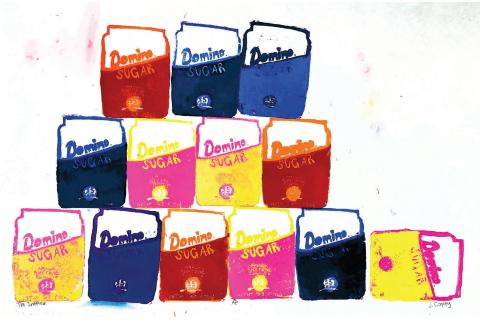


"Complex" by Aiden Ketcham (Art Fundamentals)



"Smooshy" by Aiden Bokulich (Honors Art 4)

Below: "Sweet" by Jordyn Copley (Art 2)



Dynamic Duo Supports Firelands Families

Mrs. Ashley Blair brought her 13 years of social work experience to Firelands in 2022. She earned her bachelor's degree from Youngstown State University and is currently attending graduate school to complete her master's degree.

She has worked for FAITH House, a non-profit organization that provides supportive housing for single-parent-homeless families. For 8 years she was employed with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and provided substance use counseling within the state prison system.

Mrs. Blair loves the idea of prevention and support within our school system and has a deep passion for recovery.

Mrs. Deanna Watts has worked with Firelands since 2019. She has been in social work for several years in different capacities and understands the importance of academic success. She also understands that there are many issues that can be roadblocks for students, such as economic or family hardships. She strives to promote the academic, emotional, and social development of all students.

The main goal that Mrs. Watts has is to provide as much support as possible for families, students, and school staff.



Deanna Watts & Ashley Blair

Confidentiality and safety are her highest priorities.

The west side of Cleveland is home with her husband and four children. She has a master's degree in social work from the University of Illinois in Chicago, and a bachelor's degree in social work from Harding University.

Working with Second Harvest, the social work team provides monthly boxes of nonperishable food items to families. With another community partner, Big Brothers/ Big Sister of Lorain County, they are offering a mentoring program for the second year in a row. The duo is also behind the Kindness Closet, which is full of clothing. shoes, coats, hygiene items, school supplies, and more. They run focused small groups for leadership, social skills, and grief support. They also help to connect people with resources such as mental health support.

Their Kinship program had a big event in October which treated caregivers to brunch and gave time for networking and getting resources. Kinship caregivers are usually defined as a non-biological parent who is raising a child or children. Grandparents, aunts, and uncles are quite often in this situation and the Kinship program has been a big source of help and support to them.

If you or anyone you know could use this kind of help or are looking for referrals, please reach out to either one of these knowledgeable and dedicated social workers. To contact Mrs. Blair, call (440) 965-5381 x. 2055 or email ablair@firelandsschools.org. To contact Mrs. Watts, call or text (440) 334-8801 or email dwatts@firelandsschools.org.

Diane Votruba Named Bus Driver of the Year

In October, the bus drivers at Firelands attended an in-service training at the New Russia Township Hall. With the help of the Lorain County Educational Service Center (ESC), one driver is recognized as our driver of the year. This year Firelands is recognizing Diane Votruba (Bus 21) as our driver of the year.

Diane grew up in the Avon Lake area. She and her husband Phil raised 3 daughters and have 2 grandsons. When her girls were young, they moved to Wayne County where they lived while the girls were in school.

Prior to driving bus, Diane worked in a greenhouse in the area. Diane trained to drive at Northwestern Schools in Wayne County in 1992. She subbed for a couple years, and then started out on a pre-school route before becoming a full-time driver, where she drove for 15 years.

In 2007, they moved to Florence Township in the Firelands school district. For a



year and a half, she drove 50 minutes to Northwestern Schools to continue to drive for them, and finally decided it was too far! She went to work in retail for a few years but missed the big yellow bus and the kids so much. She began subbing for Firelands and was hired full time in 2014 along with daughter Sarah who is also a full-time driver at Firelands.

Diane loves her horses and her herd of dogs! Diane, thank you for your years of service to Firelands!

> submitted by Mr. Milton Sayler Transportation Director

HOLIDAY PREVIEW

Honoring Our Senior Citizens & Retired FLSD Staff

This is a free event at Firelands High School on December 7, 2023

- Doors open at 9:00 am with Breakfast beginning at 9:15 am
- Multiple holiday performances to follow
- RSVP required to Jbutchko@firelandsschools.org or 440.965.5821 ext 1015 by November 30th



Firelands Middle School News & Information

It is hard to believe that it is already November, and the holiday season is almost upon us! The year seems to be flying. The first grading period is over, and our first round of parent-teacher conferences were held in November. Our Parent Teacher Group (PTG) provided dinner for our staff on those long days, and we are incredibly grateful for their support and amazing culinary skills.

Our clubs have been very busy. Our chess club is continuing to show improvement and preparation for upcoming tournaments. The National Junior Honor Society is making blankets to donate to the Rainbow Babies Organization.

We are so proud of our 8th grade Volleyball team for a 15-0 regular season! All our Fall student-athletes showed heart and have a lot to be proud of. We would also like to congratulate our very own Mr. Bill Yakunovich on being named the LC8 Head Boys Soccer Coach of the Year. Mr. Yakunovich teaches 7th grade Social Studies at FMS. Our basketball season has started, and we wish our teams the best of luck!

We administered our MAP benchmark in September and utilized that data to place students into intervention, reinforcement, or enrichment groups based on identified student needs. These groups will be reevaluated in February after our next benchmark assessments. Providing specific instruction based on students' needs is key to closing gaps and growing our students.

Our fabulous PTG hosted a "Halloween Dance" for our students. We had a huge turnout with many students wearing costumes and they had an absolute blast! Students enjoyed



an evening of snacks, dancing, costume contests, a deejay and a photobooth.

Our first Fabulous Falcons were treated to a pizza lunch, stickers and yard signs so their parents can share their pride with the community. Our next round of Fabulous Falcons will be coming before Thanksgiving break.

Our band held their first concert on November 15. It is always so amazing to see the growth in the 6th graders each year. We are very proud of the work that goes into learning an instrument and learning to read music. It truly is learning a different language and does incredible things for their developing brains.

We are so busy, and the holidays will be here before we know it!

submitted by Mrs. Cara M. Hutchinson FMS Principal





Turkey Trot Alert! It's Not Too Late

The 2nd Annual Turkey Trot in honor of Ryan Walker is set to begin with registration at 8:30 a.m. on Thanksgiving morning, November 23rd. The Turkey Trot is a family-friendly 5K run and 1-mile walk/run. It will be held at Firelands High School. Late registrants are welcome to register on site. The event begins at 10:00 a.m.

David Ryan Walker II was a 2020 graduate of Firelands High School and student at BGSU. He was in his third year of college, studying business, accounting and finance. Proceeds and donations from the event will go to the DRW Forever Falcon Foundation which grants scholarships in Ryan's honor. Three members of the 2023 graduating class of Firelands High School received the first scholarships.

Additionally, the Forever Falcon Foundation is having a dinner fundraiser the night before the Turkey Trot, on November 22nd, at Salvatore's Ristorante Italiano. Turkey Trot participants get 1/2 off entrees.

For more information, contact Eddie Santos at eddiesantos2324@gmaill.com.

Job Fair for Substitute Teaching

On January 9th, there will be a job fair for people interested in substitute teaching. It will be held at the Educational Service Center in Elyria from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. To get more information, call the board office at 440-965-5821 x. 1010 or email to sschaefer@firelandsschools.org.

Food Service Reminders

From Judy Baumann, Food Service Director

Free or reduced carryover from 22-23 ended October 16.

If you did not submit an updated or new meal application for the 23-24 school year your child / children's meal status from last year changed to DENIED on October 16. If you received a Direct Certification letter, you do not need to complete an application. Applications can be completed anytime throughout the school year if you have a change in income or family dynamics changed.

Do my children / child qualify for meal assistance?

Everyone that applies will receive either a letter or an email notification showing the meal status as Free, Reduced or Denied.

Free & Reduced qualified assistance allows students to get breakfast as well as lunch every day

Reduced students receive meals for free for 2023-2024 and likely 2024-2025

Directly Certified students' meal status goes into effect immediately on the day I import a file. By the time you receive the letter, your child / children are all set to receive FREE MEALS.

Online Portal applications are pending until they are approved by me. You will receive an email right away as I check the portal often. Once you apply and receive a notification, the meal status goes into effect immediately on the day of approval. If you have more children in your home and they aren't listed on the Direct Certification letter, add the missing child / children's name, and return the form ASAP and call Judy Baumann.

Do my children qualify for fee waiver? Instructional fees are only waived for students that qualify for free meals through a Meal Application or Direct Certification. Direct Cert/Reduced does not qualify for free instructional fees.

Direct Certification Letters:

You must sign and return the Direct Certification letter to waive instructional school fees. Only free students receive free fees. Direct Certification letters are mailed to Medicaid Reduced to notify them of meal assistance not for the fee waiver.

Paper applications or Online Portal? Be sure to check mark the Fee Waiver box on either application. This allows me to share this information with the school secretaries so fees can be waived.

Tell your child to BUNDLE
their meal! A serving of fruit or
vegetable must be on the tray for
it to be bundled as a complete
reimbursable meal. If no fruit or
vegetable is taken, the items are
rung up as an alacart purchase.
This costs more money. This
is for all students whether
Free, Reduced or Full Pay. The
cashiers remind the students
all the time to take a fruit or
vegetable.

www.payschoolscentral.com is
the site used for the online portal
for meal assistance,
online payments or to look at
what your child / children is
purchasing.
If you are unsure if your child/

contact Judy Baumann at jbaumann@firelandsschools.org or 440-965-4255 ext 3097

children qualify,

High-Tech Opportunities Available for LCJVS Students



Tom Stannard (far left) stands with LCJVS Agricultural Equipment Mechanics students, and Mason Bremke, program instructor (far right) with the Case IH tractor.

Lorain County JVS students in the Agricultural Equipment Mechanics program will be trained on a piece of high-tech agriculture equipment, thanks to the partnership of the Wellington Implement Company.

Tom Stannard, president and general manager of Wellington Implement, delivered a 2023 Case IH Puma 200 tractor to Lorain County JVS Agricultural Equipment Mechanic students.

According to Stannard, the tractor, valued at \$337,734, is equipped with the latest technology features such as GPS auto steering, hydraulic suspension, and variable-ratio steering.

"Obviously the school can't afford to go out and buy brand new equipment every year, so with the partnership with Case IH, they allow us to place equipment like this in programs like this one so the students can get familiar with some of the newer equipment," shared Stannard.

Along with the donation itself, Wellington Implement sends employees to Lorain County JVS a few times throughout the school year to work one-onone with the students and help familiarize them with the piece of equipment.

"This partnership is important to my business and this career field because it gives the students access to the most modern farm equipment and exposes them to the technology that they will encounter on the job. The better the students are prepared when entering the workforce, the more successful they are, and ultimately their future employers will be."

Mason Bremke, Lorain
County JVS Agricultural
Equipment Mechanics instructor,
looks forward to this donation
each year. "It is so important
that our students learn about
the equipment that is currently
out there in the real world, and
this piece of equipment shows
them the exact types of things
that are coming into the shops
to be worked on. I am incredibly
thankful to Wellington Implement
for this donation and their
continued partnership."

submitted by Cheryl Fridenstine PR/Marketing Coordinator Lorain County JVS

Firelands Elementary School News & Information

Firefighter Visit in 3rd Grade

Students in 3rd grade had a guest speaker on October 26th. Lt. Tomlinson from the Westlake and Amherst fire departments talked to the students about fire safety and the Great Chicago fire since the third graders read about that in a recent *Storyworks* edition. The students were

excellent listeners, and they all learned a lot. Special thanks to Mrs. Tomlinson (3rd Grade teacher) for arranging this.

Pumpkin Math & Science

First graders at FES were hard at work exploring math and science concepts with pumpkins generously donated by Schlechter Brothers Country Harvest. It is always great to have the students participate in exploration activities with the pumpkins. They determined if the pumpkin would float and worked on measuring the height and circumference.

FES teachers and first grade students have enjoyed the donations of pumpkins over the years and would like to express our continuing gratitude. Schlechter Brothers Country Harvest is located at 51593 State Route 113 in Amherst. They sell a large selection of fresh produce, hay, and straw, as well as maple syrup products (pumpkins, too!). Thank you Schlecter family!

Pumpkin Day Celebration

The students in Mrs. Hile and

Mrs. Mitchell's 3rd grade classes celebrated Pumpkin Day on Oct. 31. Everything the students did was about pumpkins. In math and science, pumpkins were weighed, measured, and rolled. In ELA students read stories about pumpkins, learned about their life cycle, drew pumpkins, and tasted pumpkin roll! The whole day was a success!



This year, FES celebrated Red Ribbon Week during the week of October 23rd through October 27th. Our school wide theme this year was, "Be Kind to Your Mind. Live Drug Free!"

Thank you to all our staff and students who dressed up this year and pledged to practice making healthy choices! When we practice making healthy











Elementary, continued from page 6

choices, we are being kind to our bodies and our minds!

One of the fun activities included each grade level dressing up based on their grade level theme for the Fall parties on Oct. 27. We love seeing the students participating with their classmates.

FES Parent Teacher Group

Firelands Elementary is very lucky to have an active PTG (Parent Teacher Group). Parents of FES students are encouraged to become involved with this group. They meet monthly and find ways to further enrich the FES environment for all our students. They are actively planning events for the students. Feel free to reach out to them to see how you can assist. You can find them on Facebook (Firelands Elementary School PTG). Their scheduled meetings will be held on the second

Wednesday of the month at 7:00 in the FES Library.

Upcoming Dates

Fall Break	Nov. 22-24
PTG Fundraiser Pickup	Nov. 28
BOE MeetingDe	c. 11 & Jan. 8
PTG MeetingDec.	. 13 & Jan. 10
4th Grade Concert	Dec. 13
Picture Retake Day	Dec. 18
Winter BreakD	ec. 22-Jan. 1
No School	Jan. 15
submitted by Mrs. Laura Groboske	
FES Assistant Principal	



LIFE CYCLE OF A PUMPKIN





Veteran's Day, continued from page 1

18 additional veterans were recognized but were unable to attend. Lastly, 42 veterans were remembered.

After names were read (with a brief recap of their service) each veteran received a small token of appreciation from the student that extended the invitation. At the end of the program, students were able to serve their guests a treat and take pictures!

A lot of practice and planning went into this event. Our fourth-grade team is honored to share with our students just how important it is to thank our veterans! We are extremely proud of our students! The Veterans Day program is a large undertaking that is greatly appreciated. FLSD is happy to recognize the following teachers who made the event possible: Mrs. Kerestury, Mrs. Scalli, Mr. DeCesare, Mrs. Socha, Ms. Menzing, Ms. McGuire, Ms. Swierz, Mrs. Williams, and Mrs. Woods. Thank you also to Mrs. Choe, Mrs. Groboske, Mrs. Hozalski, Mrs. Dalton, and Mrs. Bremke. Finally, a special thanks to sponsors Firelands Elementary PTG and Mr. Kerestury.

from the Firelands Blog by Mrs. Jennifer Butchko with contributions by Mrs. Megan Kerestury







Firelands High School News & Information

Mr. Rodd Torbert, our Jostens representative, met with sophomores and seniors last month to share information. Sophomores were given information about purchasing a high school class ring and seniors were given information about items for graduation. He came back the following week to take orders. All seniors must purchase a cap and gown for our annual commencement ceremonies. We will hold our 70th annual commencement exercises in the stadium on May 30th at 7:00 pm.

Our fall athletics have wrapped up and we are looking

ahead to our winter sports season. Congratulations to Girls and Boys Soccer for being in first place in the conference! Golf and Volleyball both finished in second place and Football finished in third. Boys Cross Country finished in 2nd and Girls Cross Country finished in 4th place. In addition, Firelands came in first place for the LC8 All Sports Cup! Congratulations to all our fall athletes on a great season!

Our Student Service department held two informational sessions for parents on November 9th. The first was a Financial Aid Night, sponsored by College Now. This was a session for parents of seniors focused on navigating the financial aid process. Parents were able to discover the possibilities and gained essential insights into funding their child's higher education journey. Our experts walked them through the various financial aid options, scholarships, and grants available, and provided valuable tips for the application process.

Immediately following, Mrs. Horton hosted a Freshman Parent Night. This was a chance to get a detailed overview of student's high school journey, including classes, highlights, grading expectations, extracurricular opportunities, and graduation requirements. Parents also had the chance to ask questions as well as connect with fellow parents.

SRO Trifiletti will be serving a free cup of cocoa to all students before school on November 20th. Students are invited to the cafeteria for their free cup of cocoa and to get to know the Firelands Resource Officer.

Our Band and Choir is looking forward to their trip to Disney World in Orlando, Florida. Students have been working hard to perfect their performances and we are looking forward to seeing pictures and hearing stories about their expeciences.

Congratulations to the Firelands Horse Judging Team

that won Ohio and qualified for nationals last spring. They won 4th place in the nation out of 47 teams. Team members are: Ava Fontaine, Jordyn Simpson, Marshall Ternes, and Jolee Wissinger. Way to go students!

The 3rd annual Powderpuff Football game was played on October 26th in the Falcon stadium. The first game was sophomores versus freshman, where the sophomores pulled out the win. Then, in a stunning upset, the juniors beat the seniors in a very intense game. Regardless of winning or losing, all students had a great time!

We did our annual PSAT test for all freshman, sophomores, and the top scoring juniors on October 12th. The PSAT test is designed to help students prepare for the SAT, college, and careers. Studies show that students that take the PSAT do better on the SAT. Data from the PSAT can be used to help students prepare for the SAT test (taken in the spring of junior year) by giving students and families specific information about individual student strengths and weaknesses. Students can create individualized study plans through Khan Academy that are based on these results and use those plans to prepare for the SAT.

> submitted by Mrs. Cathy Keener FHS Principal





Athletic News & Schedules

With so many athletic events going on each week, it's hard to get up to date coverage in this monthly publication. Most teams have social media accounts like Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), where schedules, scores, and photos are posted.

To get schedules, go to the Firelands website, and

click on "Calendar" to go to the Athletic Calendar. We are using a new athletic platform this year, but it has all of the games, schedules and locations. On X (Twitter), you can follow our athletic director, Ty Stillman, @ FirelandsFalcon. He often posts updates during games!

Firelands Choirs Ready for Holiday Events

The Firelands Choir Boosters hosted a 1 mile Color Run on October 15th and had a great turnout. All of the proceeds benefitted the Firelands Choir program. Everyone had a great time!

The choir is preparing for their trip to Universal Studios and Disney with the Mighty Falcon Marching Band. From November 17-22. The choir will be performing on the Universal City Walk Stars Stage on November 19th. Their set list includes a wide variety of songs including holiday, folk and inspirational.

Back in Ohio, all the Firelands choirs are busy gearing up for the holidays. Please try to attend one of these events!









South Amherst Tree Lighting Set for Dec. 7th

On Thursday, Dec 7th, at 630PM, the Village of South Amherst will host their annual tree lighting at the Village Town Hall. There will be carols sung by the Firelands Tri-M members as directed by Choir Leader Wendy Johnson. Children of all ages can see Santa come to town on his magic "sleigh."

A reception in the fire station will be immediately following the tree lighting with Hot Chocolate and Donuts hosted by the South Amherst Fire Association and the Village Elected Officials. The ladies of the Sandston Community Church will also be sharing their homemade cookies!

Toys for Tots will be collecting new, unwrapped toys for children in our community.

The event is open to the public, and all are welcome. Be sure to bring your holiday spirit and your best holiday sweater!

More holiday events on p. 11



December 4th @ 7:30 p.m. Festival of Carols Firelands Honors Choir at Lorain High School \$5.00

December 6th @ 7:00 p.m. Middle School Concert FHS Auxilary Gym

December 7th @ 9:00 a.m. Holiday Preview (See page 3 for more info.)

December 13th @ 6 p.m. 4th Grade Winter Concert A Child's Christmas FHS Auxiliary Gym

December 14th @ 7:00 p.m. Firelands High School Band & Choir Holiday Concert FHS Auxilary Gym

Youth Basketball

Are you looking for a great way to keep your child active this winter while teaching them team sport fundamentals? Consider Firelands Community Youth Basketball! Play on a travel team? No worries, your child can still play. We have one evening practice per week and games on Sundays. If your child is in the 1st-6th grades at Firelands, we hope to see them this winter. For information please go to Facebook at "Firelands Community Youth Basketball" or call Andy Butler, 440-787-5938.



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December I **7 PM**

2 PM December 2 Sensoru-Friendly Performance

7 PM December 2

2 PM December 3

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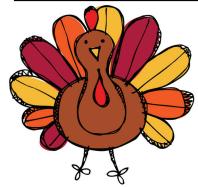
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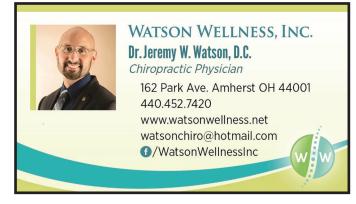
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Max **Schmittle** Financial Advisor

The Firelands Express is published 9 times each school year by the **Board of Education of** the Firelands Local School District. We are located at 112 North Lake Street South Amherst OH 44001 Office: 440-965-5821 www.firelandsschools.org email: sschaefer@ firelandsschools.org





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Next

Board of

Education

meetings:

Dec. 11 Jan. 8

Feb. 12

Mar. 11

Apr. 15

Ad space available on page 11! Email sschaefer@firelandsschools.org