

# TRANSCRIPT

HAMILTON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

*#GreatThingsHappenHere*



## 25 YEARS LATER: THE STORY OF THE HAWKEYE LOGO



**COMMUNITY  
SUPPORT MAKES  
TAILGATE & VICTORY  
DAY POSSIBLE**



**HAMILTON TEACHER  
NAMED WZZM  
'TEACHER OF THE  
WEEK'**

### Also Inside...

- A look inside the Unified Physical Education class at Hamilton High School
- How Senior Leadership has guided Hamilton Volleyball to success
- HCS Bus Mechanics keep wheels on the bus going 'round
- Hamilton High School seniors recognized for academic achievement
- Work Based Learning gets off to a busy start to 2024-25 school year
- Hamilton High School Band continues with their outstanding performances
- Offensive line gains recognition as Hamilton Football gets off to hot start

# WZZM STORY: NEW FRIENDSHIP HELPS 6TH GRADE STUDENT TO NEW HEIGHTS



Scan the QR Code to watch the video segment!

Story by Riley Mack, WZZM Reporter

HAMILTON, Michigan — Every mom has high hopes for their child's first day of school. New friends, classes and clothes. But Emily Algera had no illusions. She knew every bit of the new would be hard for her son, Josh.

"He has been in some sort of therapy, physical occupational speech since he was about six months old," she said.

Josh suffers from Fragile X syndrome. A syndrome that requires Emily a certain strength.

"As he started moving through more complex grades, he needed more support, so he ended up in fourth grade here at Hamilton in the Autism program," Emily said.

Now entering sixth grade, Josh struggles with changes in his routine, a lot of stimulation at once and making friends — things that are synonymous with the middle school environment.

"It's hard to let a child who can't verbally tell you what happened, it's hard to put them on a bus or drop them off at a front door," she said. She had no doubts of the hard that was to come. Principal Liz Morehouse was well aware.

“I've never seen him eat in the cafeteria before with his peers. Never in a gym full of peers during recess time,” Liz explained.

But it seems the first day of school is perfect for some other firsts, too. Liz saw one of her eighth grade students, Ben Grabinski, walking beside Josh in a crowded hallway. The two then sat and ate lunch together in a full cafeteria.

"It was the first time that I saw him walking in the hallway with all of the other students. And I just stopped," said Liz. "All I could do was smile, and somebody was like, 'are you okay?' And I was like, 'Yes, this is just awesome.'"

That's when Liz called Emily to share the good news.

"You get so used to getting phone calls that Josh ran away from school. Josh knocked over the classroom. And it was just nice to see him be so successful, and then see him come off the bus and say, 'I did it. I did it today,'" she said.

Ben, pitcher on his baseball team, also seems to be pitcher for team Josh.

"The principal came and told me that its first time, and I was just in shock," said Ben.

"Because he did so good." Josh has gone back to eat lunch in the cafeteria every day since.

"It just brings me joy that I'm able to help them put a difference in their lives," smiled Ben.

Ben and Josh met last year when they were placed in a 'Unified' program. This places students who struggle with social interaction with a buddy to walk down the hallway, eat lunch and even do classes together. Ben and Josh, who bonded first on basketball, simply clicked.

"We were just like really good friends," said Ben.

"I'm impressed with Ben's ability to just go with what Josh is doing and stay in the minute with him," said Emily.

Josh and Ben spend most of their time together playing games: bottle flipping, basketball and target practice with a tennis ball. They don't play against one another, they just play — enjoying the little wins, and each other.

"All that we've gone through with him and to help him get to this point, it's great to celebrate," smiled Liz.

If you see two kids playing basketball in an empty gym at Hamilton Middle School during the school day, you might think they need to get going to their next lesson. But for Josh Algera, that's where he learns the biggest lesson — that he's never really alone.

"He's had a lot of days where he's come home in tears, and so it's been good to see him come home and tell me 'I had a good day,'" Emily smiled. "It kind of feeds the soul a little bit."

Thank you to WZZM Reporter Riley Mack and 13 On Your Side for capturing this wonderful story!



# WELCOME OUR NEW STAFF MEMBERS IN THE 2024-25 SCHOOL YEAR!



Scan the QR Code to watch  
this video interviews with  
new staff!

SCAN ME

Alanna Shivers - Hamilton High School English Teacher  
 Alexandra Plese - Hamilton Middle School Spanish Teacher  
 Remington Rohrer - Hamilton Middle School Science Teacher  
 Morgan Overhiser - Hamilton Elementary Resource Room Teacher  
 Abbigal Goebel - Speech Therapist  
 Tom Burton - Hamilton High School HVAC Teacher  
 Shawna Cozzello - Hamilton Middle School Secretary  
 Janet Wenger - Hawkeye Preschool Associate Teacher  
 Stacey Swanson - Hawkeye Preschool Lead Teacher  
 Brooke Slenk - Hamilton Elementary Media Clerk & Aide  
 Jessica Ruch-Guerrin - Blue Star Elementary 4th Grade Teacher  
 Whitney Hobbs - Hawkeye Preschool & Before & After School Coord.  
 Cory Cooper - Bus Driver  
 Sean Parde - Hamilton Elementary Dean of Students  
 Tammy Clendening - Hamilton High School Custodian  
 Caylie Riess - Hamilton High School Art Teacher  
 Lauren Hansen - Hamilton High School Aide  
 Christine Evink - Bentheim Elem. Hawkeye Kids Site Supervisor  
 Laurie Mapes - Hamilton Elementary Aide  
 Crystal Burton - Hamilton Elementary Aide  
 Sarah Manner - Middle School Student Support Coordinator  
 Doug Braschler - Substitute Bus Driver  
 Gerald Hoppes - Substitute Bus Driver  
 Rachel Boerman - Hawkeye Kids Support Staff  
 Katie Baker - Hawkeye Kids Support Staff  
 Lindsey Kruithof - Hawkeye Kids Support Staff



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[HAMILTONSCHOOLS.US](http://HAMILTONSCHOOLS.US)



SCAN ME



# SENIOR EXPERIENCE & LEADERSHIP HOPES TO CARRY HAWKEYE VOLLEYBALL TO NEW HEIGHTS

The Hamilton Hawkeyes volleyball team is off to an outstanding start to the 2024 season in the new OK White. This season, the team is driven by a core group of four experienced seniors all determined to make history this fall. Kaitlyn Geurink, Maddie Stael, and Hannah Glupker have all been on varsity for four years, while Ally Kragt has been a varsity player since her sophomore year. Combined with the experience of fellow seniors Ava Slotman and Lauren VanOmmen, they have set their sights on winning the program's first-ever district championship.

“I've been working with the four seniors since they were middle schoolers,” third year head coach Britney Fogerty explained. “To see how much they have grown as players and people is something I'm so happy to be a part of. We have created the best coach-player bond I could ever ask, and I'll miss that in the future.”

The road hasn't been easy for the Hawkeyes in years past. The players have experienced defeat in the district championship game the past two seasons, first to Holland Christian and in 2023 against South Christian.

“Over the years, I've had role models on the team that I've looked up to,” said second-year captain, Hannah Glupker. “I've worked on my leadership and being where I need to be for my team. There's a lot of belief in this group.”

Reflecting on the team's previous district championship appearances, Geurink shared, “It's something that you're so close to but have never gotten, it just drives you more and more, and this is our last chance to get it. This really motivates us.”

This year, the stakes are even higher as Hamilton hosts the district tournament in early November. “We're very excited,” said Stael. “We've all been on varsity for a long time so we've been in district games before, and we know what it's like to lose. We know what to expect now.”

With this season marking their final opportunity, Kragt echoed the team's determination: “It's our main goal, it's our last hoorah, and I really think we can do it.”



L to R: Glupker, Kragt, Geurink, Stael



# MEET OUR HCS TRANSPORTATION MECHANICS WHO KEEP BUSES SAFELY ON THE ROAD



Scan the QR Code to watch this video feature!

At Hamilton Community Schools, the safety and reliability of our buses are paramount. Every school year, our fleet of buses cover over 435,000 miles, ensuring that students across our district arrive at school and home safely. Behind the scenes, a dedicated team of mechanics works tirelessly to keep the buses running smoothly.

Brian Gilman, who has been with the district since March of 2023, brings a wealth of experience and precision to the team from his experience as a semi truck mechanic. His expertise ensures that our buses remain in top condition, minimizing downtime and maximizing safety.



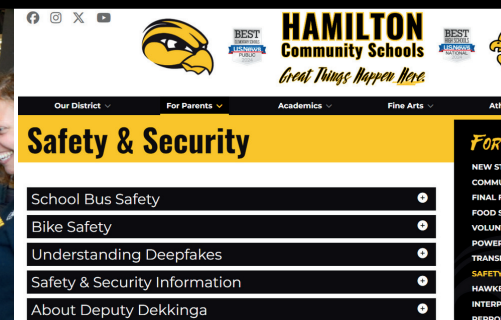
“We take a lot of pride in this,” Gilman explained, “We have to have the kids and these buses safe no matter what. I liked working on the semis, but this is even more rewarding keeping everyone safe.”

Bill Sharp, a dual talent who not only drives one of our buses but also works on them, has been a vital part of our transportation department for over three years. His hands-on knowledge from behind the wheel translates into keen insights when working under the hood.

Newer to the team is Vance Tobolt, who joined six months ago. Despite his recent arrival, Vance has quickly become an integral part of the team, contributing his skills and energy to keep our buses on the road.

With 17 full-time bus routes to maintain, the work of Brian, Bill, and Vance is essential. Their commitment ensures that Hamilton’s students can count on safe and reliable transportation every school day. The dedication of our mechanics allows us to focus on what truly matters—educating and caring for the students of our community while keeping safety as our top priority.

## INTRODUCING NEW SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER, HAMILTON GRAD DEPUTY JOHN DEKKINGA



The recent announcement of Deputy Joe Knapp’s retirement from the Allegan County Sheriff’s Department after over 25 years of service caught the attention of many in the Hamilton community. Thankfully, our new School Resource Officer is no stranger to our district and community in Deputy John Dekkinga! Deputy Dekkinga served the Ottawa County Sheriff’s Department before transitioning to Allegan County for the past 18 months. The switch to the SRO position is an exciting one for the 2018 Hamilton High School graduate.

“Transitioning from road patrol to this position, it was nice leaning on Deputy Knapp and his experience. Some of the biggest things is getting to know people in the community and forming good relationships,” said Dekkinga.

The fond memories of his time as a student in our district has Dekkinga ready to help the next wave of Hawkeyes have that same experience at HCS.

“I went to Hamilton since young fives all the way through my senior year and I played all the sports you could think of, it’s a great community. I loved every second of going to school here.”

Join us in welcoming Deputy Dekkinga back to his alma mater and be sure to check out his web page for safety and security tips!



# VICTORY DAY PROVIDES MORE SMILES AND MEMORIES FOR ALL INVOLVED



SCAN ME



Scan the QR Code to watch the Victory Day spotlight video!

Senior Anthony Gates & his partner, Londin Cooper.



The Fourth Annual Hamilton Victory Day was held on Saturday, September 28 for students with varying abilities. Each student had their moment to lineup with the football team and run through the defense on their way to the endzone for a Hawkeye touchdown! The day was made special thanks to the Hamilton football, cheerleading, and vocal music programs as well as event organizer Mackenzie Brewer. Victory Day was especially memorable for Hamilton High School seniors Anthony Gates and Ben Popma, who soaked in their big moment.



“ I ran and I scored my touchdown, like usual but this time I did my Elvis Presley dance,” Gates giggled. “This really means a lot to me, it’s my last time doing things in high school.”

The Hamilton High School Marching Band continued their dominance to begin the 2024-25 season! The Hawkeyes earned a first place finish at the Otsego Band Invitational on September 28 with an overall score of 84.4! Way to go, Hawkeyes!

## UNIFIED PE PROVIDES A PATH TO FRIENDSHIP, GROWTH, AND HEALTH AT HAMILTON HIGH SCHOOL

At Hamilton High School, a unique and impactful program is making waves within the student body—Unified Physical Education (Unified PE). Spearheaded by teacher Abby Ekkens, this class is much more than just a course; it’s a movement fostering inclusion, social growth, and physical health among students of all abilities.

Unified PE, which started at HHS in 2020, brings together students with and without disabilities to participate in physical activities designed to promote not only fitness but also understanding, camaraderie, and mutual respect. The class’ impact has extended far beyond just the gym, but has evolved into genuine friendships in the hallways, other classes, and in the cafeteria at lunch.

“ I try to really stress to all of the students that all kids are the same, all kids have the same needs, same thoughts, and it’s important that we know they’re your peers,” said Ekkens. “It’s like one big family, nobody is excluded in the hallway, everyone says hello to each other all over the building.”

The class has had a transformative impact on students with disabilities, helping them improve their health and mobility through tailored physical activities. For many, the benefits extend beyond the gym. The sense of belonging and the friendships formed in Unified PE carry over into other areas of school life, enhancing students’ overall well-being and school experience.

“I love that we can build new friendships,” said Hamilton High School sophomore Charlee Hoover, “They make things better for us and make it easier for us to do things.

For the first time in five years of the class at Hamilton High School, it will be offered in all three trimesters. The peers in the class also gain invaluable life skills, such as empathy, leadership, and collaboration. They become advocates for inclusion, understanding the importance of creating a supportive environment for everyone.

“It’s really impactful that these kids can rely on us and have a good support system from their peers,” said Hamilton High School senior and Unified peer, Ally Kragt.



SCAN ME

Scan the QR Code to watch this video feature!



# BLUE STAR ELEMENTARY TEACHER NAMED WZZM 'TEACHER OF THE WEEK'

Scan the QR Code to watch the news segment from WZZM!



SCAN ME

In a heartwarming and unforgettable moment, Blue Star Elementary's own Andrew Szczerowski was honored with the WZZM 13 On Your Side's Teacher of the Week award, he becomes the first teacher to be recognized in the 2024-25 school year. The award was presented by WZZM anchor Emily Scarlett in front of a packed gymnasium of students during an all-school assembly, leaving Mr. Szczerowski, or "Mr. S" as his students affectionately call him, completely surprised.

"It's humbling, it's a job in which you give a lot so it's fun to know that at least someone along the line was affected positively," Mr. S said in his interview with WZZM. "It's humbling and exhilarating and it's fun for the kids too, they'll remember this forever, that's the fun thing."

With 24 years of dedicated service to Hamilton Community Schools, Mr. Szczerowski has made a lasting impact on generations of students. His nomination for this prestigious recognition came from a former parent who shared high praise: "Mr. S loves to teach and has an amazing way of teaching life lessons along the way. I have been around many of his former students, and when his name comes up, big smiles shine. Many memories are reflected in his former students; he's an amazing man and deserves to be Teacher of the Week."

The all-school assembly was filled with excitement and applause as Mr. Szczerowski received his award. This honor not only highlights his exceptional teaching skills but also his ability to foster lasting connections with his students.

"There's no doubt I was made to be a teacher, it's who I am, so there's a feeling that I am in the right place, not just professionally but where I'm at. This community and I mesh very well together," added Mr. S.

Mr. Szczerowski's dedication to education and his passion for teaching are evident in every aspect of his work. His approach to blending academic lessons with important life skills has earned him the admiration of students, parents, and colleagues alike.

"When kids walk into his classroom, they know they are cared for," said Blue Star principal, Dr. Kari Huckaby. "He inspires them to love math and other subjects, he shares authentic stories to help guide them into being amazing people."



Blue Star Elementary teacher Andrew Szczerowski (middle) with the 13 On Your Side crew.

## BENTHEIM EL. RAISES \$17,752 WHILE BUILDING COMMUNITY

Bentheim Elementary School is off to a strong start again this year, emphasizing community engagement and school spirit through a series of exciting events. Among the highlights, the annual Hawk Walk fundraiser has achieved record-breaking success this fall, raising more than \$17,000 for the Bentheim PTO to assist with school initiatives. This new milestone has led to an exciting consequence for Principal Jared Randall, who will now spend an entire day on the school roof and fulfill a promise to kiss a cow, a challenge issued to motivate the students, which certainly worked.

"For me personally there's nothing better than a Friday morning, sun peaking above the clouds, parents interacting with one another and building community, kids are playing and running around, the reason we did it is to build community, and a huge credit goes to our PTO," said Bentheim Elementary principal, Jared Randall. Funds raised will go directly to fund events like assemblies, field trips, fun nights, BEST school store, and more.

In addition to the Hawk Walk, Bentheim Elementary is creating meaningful connections between families, staff, and students through its "Donuts at Dawn" events. These morning gatherings, split into thirds, provide a relaxed environment where parents, students, and community members can come together, enjoy breakfast, and strengthen the bonds that support student success.

“These kind of events are what make memories for kids in elementary school, these are the things that really stick out to students,” added Randall.



Mrs. Blahnik rocks the air guitar during her Hawk Walk!



Scan the QR Code to view photos of the Bentheim Hawk Walk & Donuts at Dawn!



# HAWKEYE HOMETOWN TAILGATE BRINGS COMMUNITY TOGETHER FOR A FOURTH CONSECUTIVE YEAR

Hamilton Middle School and Cultivate Community Church were buzzing with excitement on Friday as over 2,000 community members gathered for the Fourth Annual Hawkeye Hometown Tailgate. This beloved event has grown into a highlight of the fall season, bringing together families, friends, and fans for an unforgettable day of fun, entertainment, and school spirit. The event, which featured dozens of free family activities, offered something for everyone. Attendees of all ages enjoyed scaling the rock wall, visiting animals at the petting zoo, getting creative with face painting and henna tattoos, and navigating the 18-hole mini golf course. Street performers entertained the crowd, while performances from Hamilton's vocal music and band programs provided a lively soundtrack to the festivities.



In addition to the wide variety of activities, the tailgate celebrated the heart of the community spirit at Hamilton. The event was a true testament to the dedication of Cultivate Community Church, Hamilton Middle School, and the many volunteers who helped make it a success.

The day culminated with the Hawkeye football team taking on Wayland, continuing the momentum of the celebration on the field. The Hawkeyes delivered an impressive 35-0 victory to improve their record to 3-1 on the season. The win was the perfect capstone to a day filled with school pride and unity.



Thank you to all of our community sponsors, volunteers, non-profits, and vendors who made the evening such a big success!



➤ Five Hamilton High School seniors have been recognized by College Board for high academic achievement and high scoring on the PSAT. From left to right: Bradon Brouwer, Jude Christenson, Emily Bittner, Abatu Dykstra, and Lincoln Phillips.



➤ Direct College Credit! Mr. Dan Meiste's business development class signed up for their free college credit in September (paid for through Career and Technical Education funds) through Muskegon Community College! When the students pass the class, they will receive four college credits, transferable to most local colleges, thanks to Mr. Meiste's accreditation through MCC!



## *Great Things Happening at Hamilton High* 😎

➤ Professionals visit Mr. Tom Burton's HVAC class at Hamilton High School. Experts from Trane stopped by the class to explain differing parts in HVAC units, provided a behind the scenes look at the coding and operation behind them, and also gave the students a tour of Hamilton High School from an HVAC lens, looking at boilers, air circulating, and ventilation.



# STUDENTS DIVE INTO WORK BASED LEARNING TO START THE 2024-25 SCHOOL YEAR



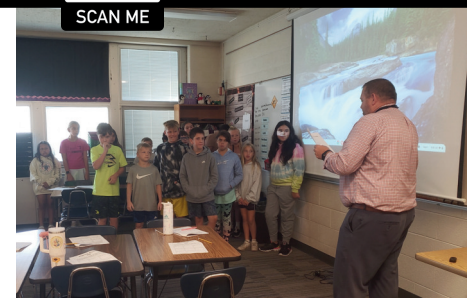
Work Based Learning Website  
By: Ashley Meyer

SCAN ME

## 5th Grade Digs Into Construction:

**Skills4Success Day:** Students had the opportunity to learn from professionals about each important Skill4Success (Employability Skills): Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking/Problem Solving, Ethical Citizenship, Flexibility/Adaptability, Personal Accountability, and Technology Literacy.

**Entry Event Visits:** Students traveled in their homeroom groups to one of several locations that have been renovated from their original design (Civic Center, GMB-Holland, GRCC Lakeshore Campus, and Sligh Apartments). Students heard from architects about design elements, the history of the space, and the purpose behind renovation. These visits were a kick-off to the 5th graders' Project Based Learning project in which they will pitch ideas that provide solutions to the driving question of, "How might we redesign the 'old bus garage' building to be a useful and usable space for the Hamilton Community Schools?" Seeing other "old spaces" that were redesigned will help students not only think of ideas and learn about the processes, but it also allows for career exploration in construction, architecture, and design.



## 6th Graders Kick Off Business Career Pathway Experiences:

**Business Visits:** Students kicked off 6th grade Work Based Learning with initial business visits to various local business. Students were able to tour the business and learn more about the operations and opportunities within that career pathway. Thank you to Cento Anni, Evoqua Water Technologies-Xylem, Gentex, Holland Energy Park, K&R Truck Sales, JR Automation, and West Michigan Regional Airport for hosting our students. The "Business" behind professional sports: Professionals from the Grand Rapids Griffins Business Office came out to Hamilton to talk to 6th graders about the "business" that is behind a professional sports team. They talked about various careers that deal directly with athletics but aren't the athlete or coaching staff. This experience sets students up for attending the Grand Rapids Griffins school day game in November where they can see all of the things the front office talked about to make a hockey game a success.

## 8th Grade Financial Simulation:

On September 23, all 8th grade students participated in a "financial simulation" to see all of the expenses that come up in a month that need to be budgeted for. Students started with a career of interest and the respective salary. From there, students rolled the dice to determine marital status and number of children impacting their household. Students went from station to station keeping track of their monthly expenses ranging from transportation, insurance, healthcare, childcare, pets, savings, student loans, clothing and essentials, etc. Students even had to roll dice in order to experience an unexpected cost such as their refrigerator needing a repair. After the simulation students spent time with their advisory teacher talking about budgeting, needs versus wants, and preparing for upcoming expenses they will have in high school.

**HAMILTON'S GOT TALENT 2024**

**Auditions**  
Saturday, Oct. 12  
Hamilton HS Auditorium

Solo & Groups can audition live or via video  
Registration Fee: \$15 (per act)  
Admission to watch auditions: \$5 suggested donation

Register to audition online here or with a paper form.  
Live Registrations may be accepted.

**ALL AGES & TALENTS WELCOME!**

## Outside Learning in 8th Grade STREAM:

8th grade STREAM students took their learning outside on the campus of HMS to learn about water, soil, and forests as it applies to their PBL project driving question, "How can we maintain natural resources at Hamilton Community Schools while ensuring they are functioning as a usable school space?". Thank you to professionals from the ODC, Allegan County Conservation District, and Michigan Forestry for sharing their expertise on mitigation strategies, forestry, soils, conservation, land use, and water quality. Our students are excited to keep learning more as they dive into this project.





Hello Hamilton Community Members,  
I hope this Transcript finds you well and enjoying the beautiful change in season. We are well underway into the 2024-2025 school year with the goal of making it one of the best yet. With so many exciting things going on and covered in this edition of the Transcript, we hope you enjoy reading about them.

# AN UPDATE FROM DR. LUSK!



Bond updates can be found on our district website under 'Our District' or by scanning the QR Code!



An area that I would like to update everyone on is the work which has been and will continue to be done from the 2023 bond. A goal of the district has been to focus on the community aspect of Hamilton Community Schools. With that being said, each aspect of the 2023 bond advertised to the community has been and/or will be completed. Along with that promise, we have found that the district has been able to accomplish more than intended with proper fiscal management and planning. Along the way, we have listened to community members as to their requests or concerns over the past year and have addressed some safety concerns (athletic walkway and better lighting options for walkways and parking lots on our campus). We have also been able to upgrade options in some classrooms for students and staff to provide a better learning and working environment. Our goal has been and will continue to be making Hamilton Community Schools the best place to work, learn, and grow for staff and students.

We would also like to thank our community sponsors, volunteers, and members for their support during this school year. Over the short time of the start of the school year, it has been awesome to see special events across all grade levels from events like Donuts at Dawn at Bentheim Elementary, to students supporting each other at the middle school, and the celebration of cherished staff at the high school by students. Without the gracious support from our increasing number of sponsors for the Hawkeye Hometown Series, events such as our record breaking Tailgate and Victory Day would not be as successful. These events are prime examples of how our community comes together to support our school district! Our Homecoming week was another example of our students showing their pride in HCS, along with having some fun! With these annual traditions being so successful and supported, it truly highlights what it means to be a Hawkeye.

One of my favorite things about my position is the ability to visit different buildings and schools. Getting around to the buildings allows me to see and interact with staff and students, which always puts a smile on my face. Seeing the students walking through the halls smiling, interacting with each other, and the positive attitude toward staff continues to solidify that HCS is a special place to be. Yet it is not just special for students, as many conversations with new staff impress me with how excited they are to be a Hawkeye. Having staff comment on how they feel part of a team and valued as not only a staff member, but as a person. This support does not solely come from fellow staff members, but rather from the students, parents, and stakeholders. Your support does not go unnoticed and is appreciated. Thank you!

As the leaves continue to turn colors and the weather becomes more brisk, I hope you are able to enjoy this special time with family and friends. We will continue to make HCS the best possible school district for staff, students, and stakeholders!

Take care, thank you for your support, and as always #GoHawkeyes

Dr. Bradford Lusk  
Proud Superintendent



'Like' Hamilton Community Schools on Facebook to stay up-to-date on all district happenings!



Or visit our website:  
[HamiltonSchools.us](https://HamiltonSchools.us)

## Upcoming 'Scoop with the Supt.' Dates:

'Scoop with the Supt.' community forums are an opportunity for parents and community members to discuss any district happenings, ask questions, and enjoy free coffee and light breakfast in a relaxed setting. All will be held at Hawk's Nest Restaurant (3420 M-40).

Thursday, Oct. 17 | 9:00-10:00 AM

Thursday, Nov. 7 | 9:00-10:00 AM

Thursday, Nov. 21 | 9:00-10:00 AM

Thursday, Dec. 5 | 9:00-10:00 AM

# HAMILTON OFFENSIVE LINE RECEIVES RECOGNITION FROM 13 ON YOUR SIDELINES



The Hamilton varsity football team's offensive line received special recognition from 13 On Your Sidelines during their football show on Friday, September 20. The Hawkeyes were honored for their exceptional performance in a 49-0 win over Grand Rapids Union on September 13, where they helped the offense amass 425 total yards, including 309 on the ground improving to 2-1 on the season.

"We all worked in the weight room in the off-season," said senior Breslin Nykamp. "We are all level-headed, we're all equal, we don't have too big of leaders and we're all just great friends."

The offensive line, consisting of left tackle Ben Nykamp, left guard Breslin Nykamp, center Tyler Michelson, right guard Dakota Breuker, right tackle Dominic VanDerHulst, H-Back Logan Eding, and tight end AJ Friedrieachsen, was presented with a plaque to celebrate their achievement.

“ This is a great thing for our line,” said Dominic VanDerHulst, “We've all been putting the work in and working as a team, it paid off. It is really cool to feel appreciated for our work because offensive lines don't really get talked about.”



# HAWKEYE PRESCHOOL GROWING & FLOURISHING

Hawkeye Preschool, a key part of Hamilton Community Schools, is making significant strides this year with expanded programming and new staff members. Housed in the newly transitioned Sandyview Learning Center, the preschool is helping young Hawkeyes grow both inside and outside of the classroom.

This year, the preschool introduced two full-day PreK for All classes, running from Monday to Thursday. These are led by experienced educators Amy Herrema and Leslie Russell, who are supported by their associate teachers Maggie Chhom and Noella Sek. Additionally, a half-day 3's program is available with sessions on Monday/Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday, along with a half-day PreK for All class from Monday to Thursday. These classes are led by experienced educator Stacey Swanson and her associate teacher Janet Wenger.

In an exciting addition, the preschool at Sandyview Learning Center now houses the district's Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) class in both the mornings and afternoons, which continues to be led by Laura Modreske and her para-professional Brittany Jones. These classes provide tailored instruction for children who need additional support during their early learning journey.

With the transition of Sandyview from an elementary building to a learning center, the staff has navigated the changes smoothly, creating a positive environment for both students and families. "Preschool is off to a good start, and the students have done a fantastic job settling into a routine," said new Hawkeye Kids and Hawkeye Preschool Coordinator, Whitney Hobbs. "The staff has also done a great job rolling with the Sandyview transition." One of the most exciting features of the new learning center is the upgraded outdoor play space. "We have all new playground equipment, which the students love, and they've also been able to explore the nature playground area in the woods," Hobbs added.

Hawkeye Preschool continues to provide a nurturing and enriching environment for its students, preparing them for the future while ensuring their early years are filled with discovery and fun! Learn more information on our website or on the 'Hawkeye Preschool' Facebook page!



## HOW MR. SAYCOCIE & MR. MOUSEL ARE KEEPING LEARNING FUN IN 7TH GRADE MATH

Veteran math teacher Bill Mousel, with over 30 years of experience, and second-year teacher Preston Saycocie have teamed up to make math exciting for their students this school year. The duo kicked off the year with immersive, game-based learning experiences, including "Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle" and "The Search for Sunken Treasure," designed to engage students in fun and challenging ways.

"Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle is a four-compartment lock box challenge," explained Mousel. "Students work in groups to solve puzzles and unlock compartments in a race to escape the game. Only one group leaves victorious!"

In mid-September, the "Search for Sunken Treasure" brought students through a series of math puzzles focusing on adding and subtracting integers, with the ultimate reward of opening treasure-filled boxes. "There's satisfaction in figuring out a code and even more joy when students understand the content and solve the puzzle," said Saycocie.

These creative approaches are helping set the tone for an engaging school year. "We want students to know their math experience will be different this year," said Mousel. "There's fun and adventure in the challenges of math."

Both teachers share a commitment to creating an immersive learning environment. "Most students are excited and bought into the experience," said Saycocie. "We make it as immersive as possible, from fog-filled classrooms, to costumes and ambient noise."

Reflecting on their partnership, Mousel said, "I appreciate working with someone like Preston who is creatively like-minded and willing to go the extra mile for students. He brings great ideas and cares deeply about delivering a quality experience."

Saycocie added, "Having Bill as my mentor has been a blessing. He's helped me explore my creative side while keeping me grounded. Together, we've committed to making math fun for our students."



# 25 YEARS LATER: HOW & WHY THE HAMILTON HAWKEYE LOGO WAS CREATED

Scan the QR Code to watch the full story!



On a crisp October 1, 1999 evening, the crowd at Hamilton's football game buzzed with an unusual anticipation. It wasn't just the thrill of the game that had the community on edge—something even bigger was about to happen. At halftime, a new logo, one destined to become the symbol of Hamilton for generations, was set to be unveiled. This moment, however, began months earlier, sparked by an unexpected challenge that would bring out the creativity, unity, and pride of the entire school district.

That summer, Athletic Director Doug Braschler and head football coach Terry Stehle faced a sudden dilemma. For more than a decade, Hamilton Community Schools had proudly displayed the University of Iowa's Tigerhawk logo on their uniforms and throughout the district. "What I think had happened was because of association to the University of Iowa, people from Hamilton took trips there and purchased gear," said Hamilton Board of Education member and Mr. Hamilton, Loren Joostberns. "Before you knew it, the logo was everywhere, and we just started using it." But that year, everything changed. "We went to order the Iowa Tigerhawk, as we had for years," Braschler recalls, "and Terry came in, threw down the supplier's magazine, and said, 'We've got a problem.' The University of Iowa won't let us use their logo anymore."

It was a significant issue. The Tigerhawk was embedded in Hamilton's identity. It was everywhere—from the gym floor, to the press box, and band uniforms. "This is going to be a problem," Braschler thought. But rather than simply replace the logo with something generic, the school chose to turn the obstacle into an opportunity. Braschler and staff decided to hold an art contest to design a new Hawkeye logo, calling on the creativity of students, staff, and community.

The response was overwhelming. "We figured we'd get maybe 75 to 100 entries," Braschler reflects. "But we ended up with 385." The entire district was engaged, with designs pouring in from students, alumni, and staff members alike. A committee made up of a wide range of boosters, PTO leaders, and students from both the middle and high schools carefully reviewed each submission. Narrowing down 385 entries was no small task, but eventually, they selected a top 10, which was then whittled down to a final three for Hamilton graduate, Sarah Hemmeke to re-work and turn into a finished logo.

Among the finalists was a design submitted by Bob Ward, then a senior at Hamilton High School. Ward had a passion for art, and when the contest was announced, he felt an instinctive drive to participate. "It was kind of a no-brainer for me," he recalls. "Why not try to win the thing?" His design, a bold reimagining of the Hawkeye, captured the essence of the school and quickly rose to the top of the selections.

Winning the contest turned out to be more than just a school achievement for Ward—it was the start of something much larger. "25 years goes by really fast," Ward reflects. "It was a pretty epic moment in my life and the beginning of my career in art and design. That all gave me the confidence to pursue this path."

Ward, who is now a graphic designer and artist living near Hollywood, California, made a design especially memorable with a hidden detail that only the most observant would catch. "It's true," he admits with a smile. "I put my initials in there—R-W. Once you see it, you can't unsee it. The R [for my full name, Robert] is in the cheek, and the whole head is shaped like a W. It was a little personal signature, a piece of me in the logo."

The unveiling at halftime was nothing short of electric. As the crowd gathered to witness the new symbol that would represent Hamilton, the excitement in the stadium grew. "People didn't care about the game," Braschler recalls. "They just wanted to see the logo." When it was finally revealed, the community erupted with pride and enthusiasm.

Since that night, the impact of Ward's design has endured. "Whenever I go back home, I see it everywhere," Ward says. "It's on barns, on signs, and all over Hamilton. It's one of the most impactful things I've done in my career, and I did it right at the start."

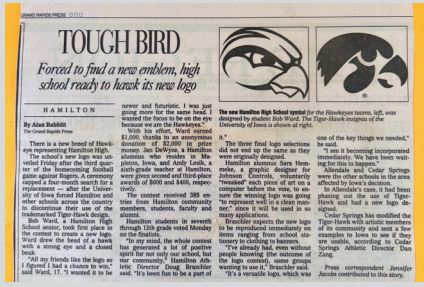
For Ward, the legacy extends beyond just his own pride. Now, his niece and nephew Elle and Evan Kowalski attend Hamilton Community Schools, and they proudly wear the Hawkeye on their clothes, even if they don't fully understand its significance yet. "They say, 'Uncle Bob made that!'" Ward laughs. "They don't really get it now because they're young, but someday they will. Since I live in California now and they're still in Hamilton, it's nice to have something that connects us both to the community I grew up in."

Hamilton's new logo wasn't just a fix for a trademark issue. It became a symbol of the school's resilience and creativity. What started as a crisis turned into an opportunity to involve the community and inspire future generations. Today, the Hawkeye stands as a testament to Hamilton's spirit—one that refuses to be defined by challenges but instead turns them into lasting legacies.

Then Hamilton AD, Doug Braschler with Bob Ward at the football game unveiling on October 1, 1999.



Photo Courtesy of Bob's sister, Jen.



## IMPORTANT DATES



OCTOBER  
11  
Half Day

OCTOBER  
24 & 25  
No School

NOVEMBER  
8  
Half Day

NOVEMBER  
27-29  
Thanksgiving Break

DEC. & JAN.  
23-3  
Holiday Break

JANUARY  
24  
No School

FEBRUARY  
10  
Mid Winter Break

MARCH  
7  
No School

APRIL  
4-11  
Spring Break

MAY  
8  
Half Day

MAY  
26  
Memorial Day

JUNE  
6  
Half Day & Last Day



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Photo via Nicki Boerman



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## BITTERSWEET RETIREMENTS...



SCAN ME

Chuck's WZM Retirement Article

**13** ON YOUR SIDE

Deputy Knapp's WZM Retirement Article



SCAN ME



“It's sadness but happy tears,” Chuck smiled. “This is something I will never forget.”

“Knowing that I made a difference in community and in the county means a lot,” Deputy Knapp said, “The interactions with the kids every day is what I'll miss the most.”

Hamilton Community Schools recently bid a fond farewell to two of its most beloved staff members—Chuck Breuker and Deputy Joe Knapp—who both retired on August 29. Chuck Breuker, a Hamilton High School graduate and familiar face in the district, retired after an astounding 47 years of service as a custodian at his alma mater. His smile and friendships with students and alumni has been a staple of Hamilton High School for his nearly five decades.

Deputy Joe Knapp, the district's first-ever school resource officer, was hired in December 2022 and helped install new Emergency Operations Plans and staff trainings in the district. A trusted member of the Allegan County Sheriff's Department for 26 years, Deputy Knapp quickly became a key part of the Hamilton school community.

Hamilton High School students and staff came together on their last day, giving high fives and a word of gratitude for their commitment. Chuck was given a No. 47 jersey with his name on it by the Hamilton football team and WZM even came out to interview and celebrate them both. Enjoy retirement, Chuck and Deputy Joe!

