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# MEMO

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**FROM:** MRS. SUSAN E. WILSON, SUPERINTENDENT  
**TO:** BLUE RIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
**DATE:** MAY 2020  
**RE:** SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

**Honoring Alice Jones for 10 years coordinating the SCRC Backpack Food Program:** In the Summer of 2010 Alice Jones called me with a desire to create a supplemental feeding program for students at risk of hunger who lived in the Blue Ridge School District. We worked with the Salt Creek Resource Center to develop a program under their umbrella organization, and the Backpack Food Program (BFP) was born. The BFP is a voluntary program provided by the SCRC to our students. Families sign up for the program and can discontinue participation at any time. Participants receive supplemental food each week, intended to provide food over the weekend.

Alice, with the steadfast support of her husband Stan, have coordinated the program, including a large group of volunteers who meet monthly to pack the bags of food. She is “retiring” from her post at the end of this school year. The SCRC honored Alice with a plaque for 10 years of faithful service. Many of the volunteers and school personnel who assisted with the BFP also sent Alice and Stan notes of appreciation. We at Blue Ridge want to also gratefully acknowledge all Alice and Stan have done for our students. Thank you both! We wish you all the best!

**Kiwanis Honors Pam Davis, Key Club Sponsor:** BRHS Teacher, Pam Davis, has served as the sponsor of Key Club throughout this past year. Key Club is a youth organization under the auspices of Kiwanis Club of Farmer City, with the goal of providing service to our local community. Key Club conducts blood drives and has numerous local service projects to benefit our communities. Pam and her husband will be moving out of state this summer, but we are truly grateful for her dedication to this important service club.

**City of FC Plants Trees at BRHS:** The City of Farmer City is doing some work along John Street. They had some trees to relocate from another part of the project and have offered to plant them in the green space along the HS parking lot. We think the project will give that area some much needed color. Thank you, City of Farmer City!



**Portability granted for the BRHS OL/Stats Transitional Math course!** The Applied Math course at BRHS has recently received portability status. This means that any senior who enrolls in Applied Math, having already received three math credits, will, upon completing the course with a C or higher, be eligible to enter credit-bearing math courses at any community college in Illinois without taking a placement test. Congratulations to Marcus Minter for his work on this project and for teaching this new course, and to Dr. Stanifer for shepherding the school through the extensive process!

**Financial Management for School District:**

The fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic and economic shutdown has created many unknowns for governments and schools. A number of issues could create problems for us, such as fewer state dollars, reduced or late collections of property taxes, or declining enrollment. As a district we are taking steps to be prepared for possible issues: checking cash flows for the short and long term, talking to the county about property tax collection schedules, monitoring state funding and late payments, placing all of the HVAC in our buildings on low-occupancy mode, holding off on hiring some positions, and paring down summer construction type projects. So far things look okay for Blue Ridge, but we want to be cautious.

Following are issues to be aware of going forward:

- Any issues will not affect only FY20. It is likely we will see impact in FY21 and possibly beyond that time.
- Preparations for the 2020-21 school year will include plans for a variety of potential scenarios, including (1) school as usual, (2) continued remote learning, (2) some sort of hybrid plan. It is also possible that school may open as usual, but due to a resurgence in COVID-19, need to return to remote learning for a time. All of these contingencies are under consideration.
- Special education service delivery is especially affected by issues surrounding Remote Learning. We will continue to work carefully with TCSEA to ensure our students are receiving what is needed.
- In fall of 2020, all schools will receive the same ESSA designation as they received last year.
- It is not clear when we will receive the State Maintenance Grant funds that are partially paying for the VAV replacement at BRHS. That said, we have been told that we will receive the funds eventually.
- There is no clear information on funding for the PreK grant, but cuts to funding may be possible in the future. For now, we plan to continue with PreK programming per normal.
- CARES grant funding for school districts will be able to be used for extra expenses incurred beginning on March 13, 2020. We were given a preliminary allocation of \$115,000 which can be used for expenses related to internet jupacks, other technology purchases, Chromebooks, and other COVID-19 related costs.

### **Remote Learning Updates:**

I continue to be amazed at the work being done around the district by our faculty, staff, and administrators. It is tremendously disorienting to be functioning in isolation, but to still try to maintain a sense of coordination and togetherness. **Our team has risen to the challenge and exceeds all of my expectations.**

**Feedback sought:** Parents and students have the opportunity to provide us with feedback regarding their experiences with Remote Learning this past spring. We hope to gather good information in order to continually improve.

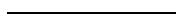
Our counselors have put together a **virtual field day** for the last week of school – with the goal of a fun way to keep everyone connected and engaged. Hillary Stanifer and Paige Trimble have developed a **summer learning choice board** that will provide light and fun learning opportunities for our students. In the fall, students will return the completed boards to their 2019-20 teachers at the start of the school year – providing a nice way to close out the school year and transition to the next.

Finally, we were greatly pleased to see that ISBE, IDPH, and the Governor’s office revised their graduation guidance to allow for **Drive-in Graduation**. Mr. Lawrence and the high school staff worked with Mr. Kramer and the tech team to put together a wonderful program for our students and allow families and community members to be a part. Following the ceremony, we will have a parade through all 3 towns, escorted by SRO Mack King and members of the police and fire departments for our 3 communities. BRHS Student Council purchased banners for each student, and the high school purchased yard signs. I appreciate all of the efforts to make this graduation an extra special one for the class of 2020.

**ISBE IDEA Annual Review:** Each year ISBE reviews our special education services and determines if we meet requirements in specified categories. We received a perfect 4.0 on our review for the 2018-2019 school year. Congratulations and thank you to our special educators and support team from TriCounty Special Education Cooperative. Job Well Done! To see the report, go to <https://5il.co/flwv>

**Energy Rebate:** We received an energy rebate of \$28,021 for the BRHS Energy Efficiency Project. These funds have been deposited into the Capital Projects fund and will be available for future projects.

**EPA Soil Tests at Transportation Center:** Bodine Environmental conducted soil tests to determine degree of remediation needed by the fuel tanks. Their report indicates that no excavation is needed. This information has been sent to the EPA for their review. If the EPA agrees, then we will not need to engage in further remediation activities.



### *A Few Last Words...*

*Dear Blue Ridge Community:*

*It has been my distinct honor and privilege to serve Blue Ridge these past 20 years. David and I gladly made this our home and raised our family here. Both of our daughters are proud Blue Ridge graduates and found that the district prepared them well for their future. God has faithfully carried me through the ups and downs of the job over the years, and that has remained true for this exceptionally challenging last year of my career.*

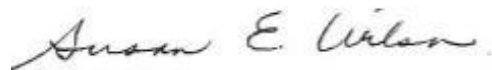
*I have been blessed to work with many excellent, committed, and visionary school boards, and we have accomplished much together. I am most proud of the extensive facilities work we've done over the years; the Alternative Education Program at BRHS – which has reached kids that otherwise would not have graduated; extensive career and technical education offerings for our students, including reinstating access to programming at BACC and development of the CEO program; our exceptional instructional technology program; and the recent achievement of official accreditation through Cognia/AdvancED.*

*All of this has been a total team effort, starting with strong board support. The administrators for this district are tremendously hard-working and some of the finest people I know. They have continued to move their buildings forward in the face of overwhelming work-loads, high expectations, and heavy demands placed upon them. Our faculty and staff have gone above and beyond to create an environment where students and families are valued and supported. Blue Ridge has exceptionally strong family, community, and business support – which makes all the difference. It is clear that we care about our schools and children - and want the very best for them.*

*I leave the district in the most capable hands of Dr. Stanifer. We are blessed to have someone of her caliber to lead our schools. She has knowledge, ideas, and energy to take us on to greater heights. I can't wait to see what the future holds under her direction!*

*I wish all of you the very best - and stand ready to help and support your future endeavors. Thank you for the tremendous opportunity!*

*All my best,*



*Mrs. Susan E. Wilson*

*“Great things doeth He which we cannot comprehend.” Job 37:5b*