

Above & Beyond



Penn Manor School District

Fall 2023

Off and running

New school year begins with new personnel

Penn Manor schools opened their doors to more than 5,500 students for 2023-2024 with several key staff changes in place.

This year's opening on August 28 went smoothly, according to Penn Manor superintendent Dr. Phil Gale, who is beginning his second year as Penn Manor's top administrator.

"There is great excitement on the first day of school as the enthusiasm our staff and faculty have for our students shines through," he said. "We are eager for students to experience the challenges and

successes this new school year will bring."

Across the district, students were greeted by 33 new professional staff members for 2023-2024, including 29 new teachers. At Penn Manor High School, Doug Eby began his first year as principal, and Baron Jones took the helm at Marticville Middle School.

Other administrative changes for the new school year include Dee Galen as director of student support services, and Dan Forry as chief financial officer.

For the first time in years, students and staff did not



Baron Jones, the new principal at Marticville Middle School, assists a student on the first day of school.

have to deal with construction activity at Penn Manor High School, as the multi-year renovation/construction

project drew to a close last year.

We look forward to a very successful school year.



A Link Crew volunteer hands an incoming freshman a Class of 2027 T-shirt during the final day of a two-day orientation session.

Link Crew helps freshmen ease into high school life

A group of older students at Penn Manor High School is helping incoming freshmen acclimate to the high school environment through Link Crew.

The program matches 11th and 12th grade students with a group of 9th graders, whom they will mentor throughout the school year.

Students were recruited last

school year as Link Leaders and received training on the program, which emphasizes team building and working toward overcoming challenges and meeting shared goals.

One junior and one senior leader were assigned to groups of 10 incoming freshmen.

In August, the leaders led

More **LINK CREW** on Page 4

Millersville University offers tuition-free classes

Millersville University and Penn Manor School District have implemented a new partnership that enables students to take college courses on MU's campus each semester of their junior and senior year at no cost.

Students who participate will learn about college life, interact closely with faculty and industry experts, and be mentored by MU college students while earning up to 12 college credits, tuition-free.

Upon successful completion of the courses, students will be automatically admitted to Millersville University. They also may transfer their



credits to another college or university.

To participate in the program, students must complete four business-related courses at Penn Manor. More information about the partnership is available from the high school counseling department.

We thank Millersville University for providing this opportunity.

New principals, student services staff named

Penn Manor has appointed three principals and named a new director and assistant director of student services for the 2023-2024 school year.

Doug Eby is the new principal of Penn Manor High School. He had been an assistant principal at the high school since 2009 and previously was a middle school social studies teacher in Penn Manor.

Doug received his master's degree in Leadership for Teaching and Learning and his principal's certificate from Millersville University. He also received his bachelor's degree in secondary education from MU.

He and his wife, Jen, live in Landisville with their four sons, Conor, Brayden, Chase and Hudson.

Baron Jones is the new principal at Marticville Middle School, replacing Christine Smith, who retired in June.

Baron had previously served as principal at Penn Manor High School since 2019. Prior to that, he was principal of Conestoga Valley Middle School and an assistant principal at Spring Grove Area High School.

He received his master's degree in Educational Leadership/Principalship from Widener University's Graduate School of Education and his teacher certification from Millersville University in 2005.

Baron lives in Millersville with his wife, Georgia, and their sons, Brayden and Quinten, who attend Penn Manor schools.

Thomas "TJ" Bechtel has been named assistant principal of Penn Manor High School, replacing Doug Eby.

TJ has worked since 2017 as a social studies teacher at Penn Manor High School.

A 2016 graduate of Millersville University, he earned his master's degree in educational leadership and his principal certificate in May 2021 from MU.

He previously served as Penn Manor's assistant baseball coach.

TJ and his wife, Hannah, live in Hershey. They are expecting a daughter in October.

Dee Galen is Penn Manor's new director of student support services.

She formerly was director of special education for Hempfield School District, a position she had held since 2010. She also was coordinator of elementary special education and a learning support teacher at Hempfield.

Dee has a master's degree in education from Millersville University and earned her special education supervisory certificate from MU in 2011. She also earned her bachelor's degree in special education from Millersville University.

Dee lives in Lancaster with her two children, Parker and Trevor.

Stephanie Herrmann has been appointed assistant director of student support services.

She began working at Penn Manor in 2012 and has served as a special education teacher and special education



Doug Eby



Baron Jones



TJ Bechtel



Dee Galen

Message from the superintendent

Has a remix ever given you a new appreciation for one of your favorite songs? Does this new version have a new rhythm, new voices, or a slightly different melody? Despite these changes, the remix retains a familiar feel, even when transformed into something new and more modern than the original.

Just like a song being remixed by a music producer, our thoughts can be transformed into something fresh. My question to the Penn Manor staff at the start of the 2023-2024 school year was, "What will you remix this year?" I was not asking for drastic changes but challenged everyone to consider what subtle improvements, or remixes, they could implement to help us better fulfill our mission: *The Penn Manor community will work collaboratively to help our students define and achieve their academic and life goals.*

Our students are accomplishing great things in the classroom and in our co-curricular activities. Each school day, our students are acquiring new skills and knowledge, and there are many things happening in the district's schools that give us reason to celebrate.

However, if we aren't willing to make improvements, we will stay the same, with the risk of becoming much less effective at serving our students, whose needs are always changing. That's where the remix theme comes into play.

Last year, we started the 7th Chapter of the Penn Manor story, as I became the seventh superintendent in the history of the district. We are building this new chapter off of all the good things the district has accomplished in the chapters that came before this one. And just like in the next chapter of a good book, we are introducing new people and ideas to make our schools better.

For example, at the end of

the last school year we had some transitions in our district executive leadership team.

Dan Forry joined the district as Chief Financial Officer, and Dee Galen started as the Director of Student Services – two very important positions.

Instead of being consumed with fear and anxiety over losing two longtime members of the team, I did a remix of my emotions and thoughts and started to view this as an opportunity to add new perspectives, experiences,

and ways of thinking. The leadership team and I have been energized as Mr. Forry and Ms. Galen have joined us.



Dr. Phil Gale

I was further energized this summer as I met with the 29 new teachers who are joining us this year. They are bringing new ideas to us, and we get to share our ideas with them. I'd also like to give a special welcome to our new supporting staff members, who filled the majority of our vacant positions over the summer.

What energizes you in your role in PMSD? Whatever it is, keep in mind that you are helping students pursue their life and academic goals. We are all a part of something that is much much bigger than I ever thought. So as we remix the many ways we help students achieve their goals, think about who you will cheer for. Who will you stand with and support as they work through a challenge that becomes an opportunity? How will you influence this next chapter? What will you remix this year?

Penn Manor needs and appreciates your support. Together, we can make today, and every day, a great day to be a Comet!

– Dr. Phil Gale

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More **APPOINTED** on Page 4

Penn Manor Ag teacher spends month in Uganda

One of 10 from U.S. accepted into program to support agricultural education overseas

Few teachers have gone as far to broaden their skills over the summer as Mary Wurzbach.

The Penn Manor High School agricultural education teacher ventured to Africa to spend a month immersed in the culture and classrooms of Uganda, both teaching with and learning from her colleagues.

Ms. Wurzbach was one of 10 teachers from across the United States accepted into the Teach Ag Uganda project, sponsored by the Fulbright-Hays Program, to support agricultural education research and training efforts overseas.

Teachers were in Uganda from July 6 to August 4, with the goal of increasing their understanding of global agriculture and food insecurity and learning about Ugandan culture

and teaching methods.

Participants were paired with another American teacher and assigned to different schools in the country.

Language was not a barrier, as the students and staff spoke English.

The group started in the capital city of Kampala, traveled north to Sipi Falls and spent 18 days in Lira, where Ms. Wurzbach was assigned to St. Katherine Secondary School. She taught lessons on sustainable development goals, agriculture and entrepreneurship.

She also assisted with a project to raise 400 layer hens and taught alongside her Ugandan colleague about growing corn, or maize, which is grown on small farms in each village.

"The methods and techniques for growing



Mary Wurzbach, left, learns to cook cassava that was just harvested in the Kobe Women's Village near Lira, Uganda.

are completely different in Uganda," she said. "When I asked students about the common pests they need to watch out for when growing maize, they responded, 'Monkeys.' I was not prepared for the answer!"

Another eye-opener was the layout of classrooms, which typically have 80 to 110 students who sit on

wooden benches and remain in the same room the entire day. The school day stretches from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., with some labs held on weekends.

But what had the greatest impact was what she learned from her colleagues.

"Spending 30 days with amazing educators was the biggest highlight," she said.

Schools add 33 professional staff for '23-24

Over the summer, Penn Manor hired 29 new teachers, two school psychologists, a counselor and a librarian for the 2023-2024 school year.

This year's group includes seven Penn Manor alumni and several teachers with at least one family member who also works for Penn Manor. In addition, several teachers have multiple years of experience at other school districts.

Here are the new professional employees:

Central Manor Elementary – Maria Guevara, Kindergarten; Michele Wenger, Grade 2; Alison Stark, Grade 3; Mark Phillips, Grade 4; and Lauren McNeely, Grade 6.

Central Manor/Hambright Elementary – Cassie Bosley, Librarian.

Eshleman Elementary – Lynsey Goodling, Grade 3; and Taylor Lefever,



New teachers and other professional staff members pose for a photo during New Teacher Orientation.

Learning Support.

Hambright Elementary – Steffani Trivelpiece, Emotional Support; Michele Wenger, Grade 5; and Abigail Zeamer, Grade 6.

Penn Manor High School – Olivia Best, school counselor; Amy Chura, Learning Support English long-term substitute (LTS); Heather Stief, Art; Tamara Weaver, Psychologist; Collin Whiteside, Health & Physical Education; Zachary Zimmerman, Science; Ryan Whittle, Health & Physical Education; Tiffany Zook, Family and Consumer Sciences; Brandon Rodriguez, English LTS; and Cameron Steele, Math LTS.

Penn Manor HS/Central Manor – Tiffany Eberly, Psychologist.

Letort Elementary – Tanner Shertzer, Grade 5.

Manor Middle School – Hope Flack, English/Reading; Megan Hastings, Science; Michael McConomy, Social Studies; Kristin Putt, Learning Support Math; Erin Zimmerman, Reading; Shandra Stoner, ESL LTS; and Lisa Sellers, Emotional Support

Marticville Middle School – Ryan Schumacher, Math.

Pequea Elementary – Jana Stoltzfus, Learning Support.

Athletic teams earn honors and awards

Penn Manor's athletic teams have been competing at a high level, earning several honors while giving back to the community through volunteer service.

Here are some highlights from the 2023 spring season.

The Comets softball team qualified for districts and compiled a 14-6 overall record, tying for second in Section 1. The softball team had five players make the Section 1 All-Star team.

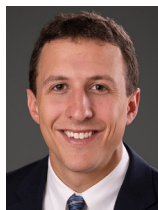
The girls' lacrosse team also qualified for districts and placed third in the section, with an overall record of 14-5. Six players were named Section 1 All Stars.

The boys' lacrosse team posted a season record of 12-6 and qualified for districts. For the second year in a row, coach Connor Rowe was named the Section 1 Coach of the Year, and seven team members were named

Section 1 All Stars.

The Comets baseball team placed third in Section 1 and qualified for the district playoffs, compiling an overall record of 12-8. The baseball team had four players named Section 1 All-Stars.

Another district qualifier was the boys' volleyball team, which compiled a 9-9 record. Three players were named Section 1 All-Stars.



Connor Rowe

Eleven members of the boys' and girls' track teams earned medals at the league meet, and nine student athletes qualified for Districts.

In addition, Izzy Kligge (girls' soccer and basketball) and Annie Bibus (field hockey and track) were recognized as the A. Landis Brackbill Award nominees



Superintendent Dr. Phil Gale, left, and high school principal Doug Eby pose with Brackbill Award nominees Izzy Kligge, left, and Annie Bibus.

from Penn Manor. The award honors multi-sport scholar athletes.

In addition to these laurels, Penn Manor athletic teams and coaches served the community by volunteering at the Tomato Fest, Toys for Tots, Community Days, Unified Track and other programs.

We commend these students and coaches for their accomplishments, both on and off the playing field.

Link Crew

Continued from Page 1

tours of the high school during an orientation session where each freshman received a Class of 2027 T-shirt. The leaders also greeted the freshmen on the first day of school, helping them get to their classes and easing any anxiety they might have had.

Throughout the school year, Link Leaders will continue to provide social and academic support to their assigned group of freshmen.

"We are excited to see a culture of students supporting students take shape at Penn Manor High School," said Courtney Harting, a Penn Manor English teacher who serves as a Link Crew adviser.

The program has had the added benefit of improving the environment for all students at the high school.

"The ninth-graders have transitioned extremely well to high school," said principal Doug Eby. "We have seen a significant reduction in discipline referrals in comparison to previous years, and our attendance rates have improved."

Appointed

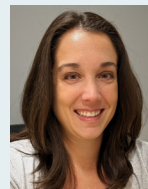
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consultant in several schools throughout the district.

Steph is a 2011 graduate of Millersville University, where she majored in elementary education and special education. She earned her master's degree in special education from Edinboro University in 2016 and her special education supervisory certificate from Slippery Rock University in 2023.

She and her husband, Dan, live in Lititz with their two sons and are expecting their third child in January.

Congratulations to these staff members.



Steph Herrmann

HS again named to Best list

Ranking in county improves to No. 2

Penn Manor High School students and staff have again earned top honors from U.S. News & World Report.

The magazine's 2023 Best High Schools issue, released August 29, ranks Penn Manor High School No. 2 of the 18 high schools in Lancaster County included in the report. That's an improvement over last year's third-place ranking.

This is the ninth year in a row that Penn Manor High School has earned a ranking of sixth or higher in Lancaster County.

In addition, U.S. News ranked Penn Manor 71st of the 750 Pennsylvania high



Penn Manor High School has been named one of the nation's top schools by U.S. News & World Report.

schools evaluated in the report, an improvement over last year's ranking of 74th.

Overall, Penn Manor earned a score of 89.29 out of a possible 100 points,

for a national ranking of 1,893 among the 17,680 high schools in the report.

The 2023 rankings are based on graduation rates; students' math and reading proficiency and whether test

scores met expectations; the participation level and performance of students on advanced-placement tests; and the performance of "underserved" students.

"This is an example of the quality education the Penn Manor community provides for our students," said superintendent Dr. Phil Gale. "Congratulations to the students, high school faculty and staff for the work they do to help students define and achieve their academic and life goals."



Hambricht named Watershed School of Excellence

Teachers lauded for focus on 'student-centered learning,' studying local environment

Hambricht Elementary School has been named a 2023 Watershed School of Excellence by the Pennsylvania Association of Environmental Educators for its efforts to teach students about the impact of watersheds on the environment.

Fourth-grade teachers Bradley Showalter and Katherine Harnish accepted the award on behalf of Hambricht at a ceremony in March. Both teachers, along with Kelley Groff and Ay'Shia Gaston, completed watershed education training in 2021 under a partnership with Millersville University, Virginia Wesleyan University and Norfolk Collegiate School.

At Hambricht, teachers incorporate lessons about watersheds – land areas that channel rainfall and snowmelt to creeks, streams, rivers, and, eventually, to the ocean – in their classes.

Students learn how to identify a watershed and how water moves within these areas. They also study the Hambricht campus and use a computer simulation to determine how surface changes would improve the watershed. Students also have conducted studies of water quality and aquatic macroinvertebrates in the Little Conestoga Creek at Maple Grove and Charlestown Parks.

The Hambricht teachers were hailed by the PAEE as “passionate, determined, and innovative educators.”

Congratulations to Hambricht, and its dedicated teaching staff, on receiving this award.



Hambricht students look for evidence of aquatic species in local creek water.



From left, Julie Yoder, Brian Wimer and Kim Frey.

Outstanding staff members earn honors for 2022-2023

Penn Manor honored its Outstanding Educators and Employee for the 2022-2023 school year during Employee Recognition Night, held April 25 at Penn Manor High School.

Brian Wimer, the head custodian at Martic Elementary, was honored as the **Outstanding Employee** for 2022-2023.

Martic principal Jen Sugra said “it gives Brian immense joy to care for others by mak-

ing sure that teachers have what they need so they can best serve kids. Brian is a humble man who loves his work and loves when others notice how clean Martic is.”

Julie Yoder, an academic support teacher at Hambricht Elementary, was honored as the **Outstanding Elementary Educator of the Year**.

Hambricht principal Eric Howe said “Julie is fearless

More **OUTSTANDING** on Page 6

PMHS teachers receive national, local awards

Two Penn Manor High School teachers were recently honored for their impact in the classroom.

Lauren Ciemiewicz, Penn Manor High School choral director and music teacher, was named Teacher of the Year by the Lancaster-Lebanon Music Educators Association.

Lauren was nominated by an LLMEA member and selected for this honor by the entire association, which includes Lancaster and Lebanon Counties, at its April 18 banquet.

In addition to teaching piano and guitar classes, Mrs. Ciemiewicz directs the Penn Manor Chorus, Manor Singers and Vocal Jazz Ensemble. She is in her 13th year at Penn Manor.

Psychology teacher Maria Vita was named recipient of the Mary



Lauren Ciemiewicz



Maria Vita

Margaret Moffett Memorial Teaching Excellence Award in the high school category.

Award recipients were selected based on effective and innovative teaching, stimulation of student interest in psychology, implementing the American Psychological Association's National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula, and professional development.

The Teaching Excellence Award, established in 1995, is granted to only one high school teacher each year.

Maria has taught at Penn Manor since 2003.

AP exam score is just perfect

Suren Clark one of only 44 worldwide to achieve feat

Penn Manor senior Suren Clark is one of only 44 students from across the globe to achieve a perfect score on the AP Microeconomics test, out of about 96,000 students who took the exam in May 2023.

Less than 0.05 percent of test takers earned a perfect score.

Suren "was shocked" to learn the results, he said. "The news was unbelievable, especially after hearing that I was only one of 44 students out of 96,000 worldwide to achieve this score. I immediately texted my parents that I had good news."

Suren credits his AP economics teacher, Chris Meier, with helping prepare him for the rigorous test, which includes 60 multiple choice questions and three free-response questions that require test-takers

to explain economic concepts and principles, perform numerical analyses and create graphs or other visuals.



Suren Clark

"Thanks to Mr. Meier, I walked into the testing center feeling confident, but not presumptuous about my readiness," he said. "Leaving the test, overall, I felt good, but the thought of a perfect score was not in my mind whatsoever."

After high school, Suren plans to major in economics and mathematics with a possible minor in political science or international studies before pursuing a law degree or a Ph.D.

He is the son of Sepideh Yalda and Richard Clark of Millersville.

Students place third in nation in TSA debating

A team of two Penn Manor High School students recently took home a top award in the Technology Student Association (TSA) National Conference.

Jordan Chen and Suren Clark placed third in the Debating Technological Issues competition at the conference, besting competitors from across the United States.

During the conference, held June 28 to July 2 in Kentucky, teams had to research a topic relating to social media and society and prepare for a debate against students from other TSA chapters.

Teams had to take either a pro or con stance on the topic, submit a summary of research references, and use that research to support their position in a debate.

Jordan, a junior, and Suren, a senior, were assigned the topic "social media promotes collective ideas and strengthens groups."

During the preliminary round, they had to debate in favor of that statement. In the final round, they had to debate in opposition to the statement.

They were judged on the quality of their debates.

Congratulations to these two young men and their advisor, technology education teacher Molly Miller.

Outstanding: Employees honored

Continued from Page 5

in her conviction to help students, and her out-of-the-box thinking has helped our district tremendously. We are proud to call Julie our teacher, our colleague, our mentor and our friend."

Kimberly Frey, a math teacher at Penn Manor High School, was honored as the **Outstanding Secondary Educator of the Year**.

Former high school principal Baron Jones praised Kim for "her tireless efforts to educate, motivate and inspire her students, which have earned her the respect and admiration of all those who have had the privilege of

knowing her. Kim is truly 'student first' and has demonstrated this many times over the years."

Also honored at the event were 2023 retirees with a cumulative 500-plus years of service to Penn Manor:

Sharon Bower, Tara Etzweiler, Cindy Frey, Chris Johnston, Christine Kinderwater, Diana Lowe, John Matusek, Shawn Maxwell, Nancy Nadig, Ginny Neiss, Rae Newhouse, Amy Niemkiewicz.

Sharon Reinhardt, Mindy Rottmund, Maryann Saylor, Tammy Schober, Deb Sensenig, Chris Smith, Kelly Sproul, Johanna Treier and Barbara Trostle.

PM hikes pay for support staff

Penn Manor recently raised the starting pay for many of its support staff positions for the 2023-2024 school year.

The district now pays \$15 an hour (plus a second-shift differential) for full-time custodians and \$14 an hour for part-time day shift building aides and food service workers.

We offer flexible hours, so you can work when it suits your schedule,



Classroom aides help students board buses at Penn Manor High School.

and an excellent work environment, with summers off.

Applicants can fill out an application today at <https://www.pennmanor.net/employment> or send a resume/cover letter to careers@pennmanor.net.

Free breakfast for all students

Under a provision of the Pennsylvania budget, all public school students are eligible for free breakfasts throughout the 2023-2024 school year.

Students are not required to sign up for this benefit.

To receive free lunches, families must complete an application through their School Café account at <https://www.schoolcafe.com/PennManorSD>.

Once logged into your School Café account, click on "apply" under the Benefits menu, complete all the required application questions, and press the submit button at the end of the application.

Commencement returns to traditional F&M site

400 in Class of 2023 earn their diplomas

About 400 students received their diplomas May 31 before an enthusiastic crowd as Penn Manor High School held commencement at Franklin & Marshall College for the first time in three years.

The graduation ceremony marked the end of a challenging four years for the Class of 2023, which lived through the disruptions brought on by a pandemic and a major construction project at their school.

"We still managed to push ourselves beyond our limits and embraced every opportunity for growth through academics, sports,

music, theater, and many other activities," Abigail Ames, class president, told the crowd.

Fifty-seven seniors graduated with honors and a GPA of 4.0 or higher; 25 students earned a total of 100 college credits while at the high school; and 269 students took 412 Advanced Placement exams in 27 different subjects.

Sixteen graduates have signed letters of intent to play sports in college, and several students qualified for regional and state competitions in band, orchestra or chorus.

Two-third of the graduates plan to continue their studies, either at two-year or four-year



Commencement was held May 31 at F&M's Alumni Sports & Fitness Center.

institutions, and six members of the Class of 2023 have chosen to enter the military.

One of them, Teagen Rodgers, began serving in February. When his mother, Danielle Rodgers, a Manor

Middle School counselor, walked across the stage to accept his diploma, the crowd burst into applause.

Also honored at the ceremony was Lauren Stoner, named Student of the Year.

Two recent graduates earn highest FFA award

Recent Penn Manor graduates Madeleine Denlinger and Micah Frey have been honored with the American FFA Degree, the highest honor for an FFA member.

Maddy and Micah earned the honors as members of Manor FFA. Maddy graduated in 2019, and Micah graduated in 2020.

To qualify for an American Degree, members must earn at least \$10,000 through a supervised agricultural experience (SAE) or earn at least \$2,000 and work at least 2,250 hours outside of class time through their SAE. An SAE is a program in which FFA members own their own business, hold a professional position as an employee or conduct research.

Recipients must also complete 50 hours of community service and demonstrate outstanding leadership abilities and civic involvement.

Less than one percent of FFA members meet this criteria and earn the American FFA Degree each year.



Micah Frey and Maddy Denlinger

Maddy has been involved in Manor FFA since 2016. She spent more than 3,000 hours working at S & A Kreider & Sons dairy farm. She has also completed 54 hours of community service.

Maddy is currently a sophomore at Penn State University majoring in food science.

Micah began his FFA involvement in 2018. His main SAE project was raising swine to show and sell at the Lampeter Fair every year. In 2022, he began another SAE project working at Frey Farms.

Micah spent 54 hours in community service projects and continues working for the family custom farming and hauling business.

Penn Manor HS junior named Dairy Princess

Congratulations to Penn Manor High School Junior Kylee Hlavaty, who was recently named Lancaster County Dairy Princess.

As princess, Kylee promotes the dairy industry at local festivals, schools and other venues, such as grocery stores. Her duties also may include passing out samples of dairy products and giving lessons on dairy in classrooms.

She began serving as princess on June 1.

Kylee learned about the dairy princess program from her grandmother, Joyce Folmer, who was a dairy princess herself in 1977 and encouraged her to apply.

Kylee's family previously owned and operated dairy farms, and she works on a farm in Lebanon County.

Kylee said she was so happy when she learned she was named princess



Kylee Hlavaty

that she cried.

Kylee is a member of Manor FFA and is enrolled in the agricultural education program at Penn Manor High School. After graduation, she plans to attend Penn State University and work as a large animal veterinarian.

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NASA scientist inspires students at alma mater

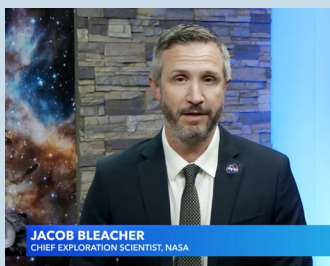
Jacob Bleacher, 1996 PM graduate, is a chief exploration scientist working on moon mission

Jacob Bleacher, a chief exploration scientist with NASA, returned to his alma mater in May to talk with students about his career path after graduating from Penn Manor High School in 1996.

Bleacher encouraged students to take as many math courses as possible and to learn the value of collaboration in the workplace.

Collaboration is key in his role in NASA's Human Exploration and Operations Mission Directorate, which is working on human exploration of the Moon and Mars. Bleacher's research focuses on understanding the volcanic history of the Earth, Moon and Mars.

He was featured on "Good Morning America" September 27 to discuss NASA's planned Artemis 3



mission to the moon in 2025.

After graduating from Penn Manor, Bleacher studied astronomy at Franklin & Marshall College, but realized he had more interest in geology and switched his major. He encouraged students to be flexible in their career paths and to follow whatever field inspires them.

He pointed out that the work he now does at NASA did not even exist when Bleacher was at Penn Manor, so today's students will



Jacob Bleacher talks to students in the high school auditorium.

likely end up in completely new fields in the future.

Whatever they do, they'll need to be able to communicate and work well with others, a skill Bleacher said he first developed even before college while working at a grocery store and as a landscaper.

"You can imagine that launching a rocket is not just one person's job. That's

not how it works. It's a huge, multidisciplinary, complicated thing that requires good relationship skills with other people," he said. "Collaborating means I'm good at this, you're good at that, and if we work together, we'll be good at the whole thing."

Many thanks to Jake for his inspiration.