

Community Connection

United in Service to our Community:

Butler Township, City of Vandalia, Vandalia-Butler City Schools

Winter 2023

Snow Plows Showcase Students' Talents

Some Butler High School students have two new reasons to hope for snow storms, in addition to sledding and days off school. At the city of Vandalia's request, these talented art students painted fun designs on two of the city's six snow plow blades and hope to delight community members with their whimsical creations.

High school teacher and Vandalia Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Chair Tara Landis liked the novelty of the idea and oversaw the students' work.

"We've had different kids come in from our painting classes, which are advanced classes for our juniors and seniors," she said. "They've been excited to take on the project."

Landis explained that the plow blades present unique challenges.

"We usually just paint on canvases or murals on walls, so this is something very different," she said. "The curve of the blade and the awkwardness of it have been tricky, so it's a learning process for us all."

One of the blades features a Yeti design, which is designed to look like a monster gobbling up snow as the plow rolls down the road. The other blade features a "snow day" design.



Oh, what fun! Butler High School junior and senior art students bring a touch of whimsy to winter.

"We've talked about how cool it's going to be to see that Yeti rolling down the street making the roads safe – but in a playful sort of way," Landis said.



The city of Vandalia and Butler Township share the services of a crisis intervention counselor. Pictured here (L-R): Vandalia Officer Shaun Coatsworth, counselor Kristina Hill, Butler Township Sergeant Todd Stanley.

Crisis Intervention Program Working

An innovative crisis intervention program – a joint initiative of the city of Vandalia and Butler Township – is making inroads in the effort to help law enforcement while improving outcomes for calls involving mental health.

The two jurisdictions' police departments share the services of Mobile Crisis Response Program counselor, Kristina Hill, who has responded to 982 calls since spring 2021 and identified the need for social services or referrals.

The most common issues that come up in her work include addiction, homelessness and domestic violence. Hill follows up with those individuals and their families to encourage them to pursue the services they need.

Officials of the two police departments are grateful to have the opportunity, made possible by a grant, to provide this service to the community.





Benchwood Station is Booming

With expansions and investments underway, Benchwood Station demonstrates it is robust and thriving. Here are some recent and upcoming projects in the district:

Hampton Inn and Suites

Township officials joined in the Hampton Inn and Suites grand remodeling celebration and ribbon cutting on November 3. The Hampton Inn has been a prime destination for area travelers since 2005, and the newly renovated hotel will continue to attract Benchwood Station visitors.

Woodspring Suites

Another new hotel chose Benchwood Station as its home. Woodspring Suites North has opened at the north end of

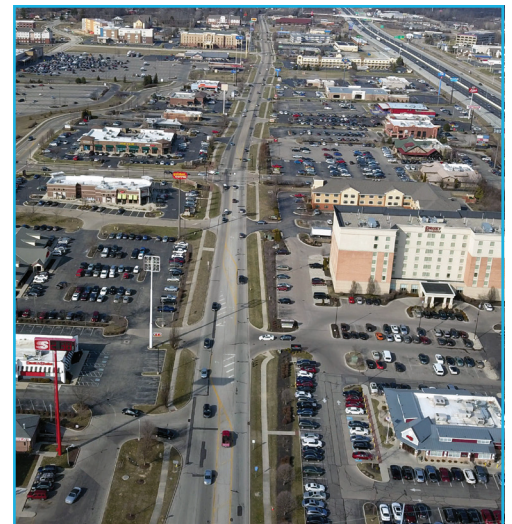
Miller Lane, on the former Knight's Inn site. The hotel features full suites with kitchenettes.

Chick-Fil-A

The popular food chain has addressed drive-through traffic issues by purchasing the neighboring residence, which will soon be demolished. The additional lot will allow for the installation of a double, circulating drive-through that can accommodate more than 50 cars. The restaurant also plans renovations and an expanded parking lot.

U-Haul Moving and Storage

Seven acres of land at the north end of Miller Lane, vacant since the demolition of an old hotel more than 10 years ago, will be home to a U-Haul storage facility offering indoor self-storage.



Benchwood Station Improvement Project

Based on feedback provided by the public, the Butler Township trustees have decided to move forward with a revised scope for improvements on Miller Lane and Benchwood Road. As a result, the township will launch the design of the following improvements during 2023:

- Lighting plans and lighting district implementation for the entire Miller Lane corridor
- Roundabout at Maxton and Miller for traffic calming and aesthetics
- Full depth pavement repair and resurfacing of existing pavement on Miller Lane, from Benchwood Road to Little York Road
- Improvements on westbound Benchwood Road for a dedicated right-turn lane on Commerce Center
- Consistent landscaping and streetscape enhancements along the entire corridor
- Entryway/gateway signage at major intersections

The township is working with the Montgomery County Transportation Improvement District to oversee the design and engineering for these improvements. It is anticipated that construction will begin in the first quarter of 2024.

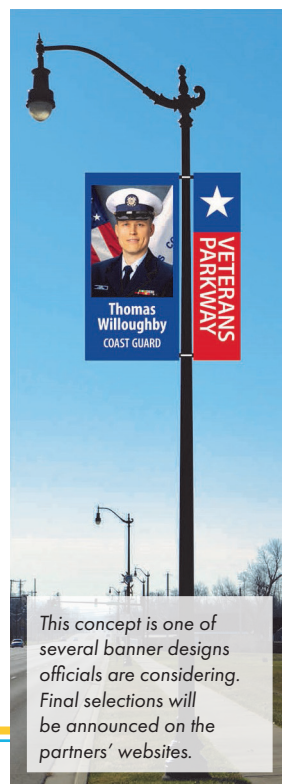
Join Us in Honoring Military Veterans

A military banner program is coming soon to the Vandalia-Butler community. Coordinated by the Vandalia-Butler Chamber of Commerce, the city of Vandalia and Butler Township, it will provide residents the opportunity to pay tribute to veterans who have served in the United States Armed Forces.

Once the program is launched in 2023, interested residents will be able to purchase commemorative banners that will be displayed on city- and township-owned street light poles along Dixie Drive, between Elva Court and Stop Eight Road.

The banners will remain hung from Armed Forces Day each May to Veterans Day each fall.

Applications for participation will soon be available on the chamber's website. Stay tuned for more information, program criteria and pricing on the partners' websites.



District Builds on Record of Success

The district's previous five-year plan was highly successful and achieved nearly all the strategic goals adopted at the time. New academic programs were added; critical programs, including full-time music and art at the elementary levels were restored; and ParentSquare, a district-wide communication platform, was launched.

VBCSD celebrated many other accomplishments, including these highlights:

- The 100th year as a consolidated district
- A record-breaking \$11,888,797 in post-secondary scholarships earned by the BHS Class of 2022
- The first Purple Up! For Military Kids recognition
- District 3 Teacher of the Year, Robbie Whorton
- District-wide pep assembly
- Summer school and additional tutoring services for students
- Additional guidance counselors and mental health therapists
- Project Lead the Way at Smith, Morton and Butler
- Large-scale events hosted in the Student Activity Center

The previous plan's success is generating great momentum and excitement for the district to continue moving in a positive direction.



Stakeholders to Participate in District's Strategic Planning

Building on the momentum of achieving the goals of their previous five-year plan, Vandalia-Butler City School officials will later this calendar year engage parents, staff and community members in the development of a new strategic plan.

During the upcoming planning process, focal points will include finances and the development of a master facility plan, which began in 2019 but halted due to the pandemic. The district did not resume planning as the focus of the last two years has been to provide the necessary in-person learning and extracurricular activities for students.

The new strategic plan will also seek answers to lingering questions that require thoughtful consideration and practical solutions. How to provide an all-day kindergarten experience? How to solve staffing and space issues at the



Kindergarten teacher Mrs. Sucher welcomes her young students to her classroom.

elementary level as enrollment disparities between Helke and Demmitt have grown in recent years?

"The district is counting on valuable input from stakeholders to help guide this process," said Superintendent Rob O'Leary.

Board Advances Murlin Heights Property Sale

Since its last operating school year of 2012-2013, the Murlin Heights Elementary School property – and its disposition – have been a priority for the Vandalia-Butler Board of Education.

The school district has been working with Butler Township officials and residents of adjoining properties to maximize the property's potential as an asset for community members, the township and the school district.

Working toward that goal, the district had the vacant building demolished in 2018. Two years later, the board authorized the district's sale of the property.

By selling the property, the district aims to bring value and enhance the community's quality of life, add value to the surrounding residential properties and generate a profit for the school district, according to

Superintendent Rob O'Leary.

Most recently, the board approved the sale of nearly 15 acres of vacant land at the site in September 2022. Their action allows the board to enter into an agreement with Horizon Line Development and allows the buyer six months to conduct due diligence, including pursuing necessary zoning approval from the township..

At closing, the sale will amount to a minimum of \$800,000 for up to ten buildable acres; however, there is the potential for an additional \$60,000 per buildable acre beyond the originally agreed-upon ten acres.



The former site of Murlin Heights Elementary School.



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Vandalia Voters Approve Cost-Saving Program

Election Day saw Vandalia voters approve two measures authorizing the city of Vandalia to negotiate opt-out electricity and natural gas aggregation. As a result, the city may negotiate on behalf of residents for more favorable natural gas and electricity rates. In essence, the program represents the pooling of citizens to become a buying group.

Once the rates are negotiated, residents

may opt out and choose their provider based on a comparison of providers at energychoice.ohio.gov. However, no action is required by residents, and participation is optional.

Butler Township voters approved their aggregation program in 2016.



Please visit each jurisdiction's website for more information:

- VandaliaOhio.org/aggregation
- butlertownship.com/services/electric-aggregation/



Electric Company Opening Vandalia Facility

A Michigan-based company with multiple locations in the region is building an electrical-parts distribution center in Vandalia. Kendall Electric, based in

Portage, Michigan, is constructing a 115,000- square-foot facility at 769 Center Dr.

The \$13.5 million structure will open with 45 full-time positions, and the company has plans to add 15 more employees within the first year of operation. When complete, the facility is expected to serve as the company's Midwest headquarters.

The company considered a number of sites before deciding on Vandalia.

Montgomery County's Economic Development/Government Equity program awarded a \$150,000 grant to assist in the project, and the Vandalia Development Corporation awarded the project a \$25,000 grant.

Construction has been ongoing since late summer, and completion is expected in spring 2023.