



Submitted Photo
Shown from left are: Head principal Tara Carey, Ava Yancey, Gabrielle Novitski, Nora Zekas, and Leona Ahmetaj.

Wyoming Valley West names December Spartan Seniors of the Month

Wyoming Valley West High School recently named its December Spartan Seniors of the Month, recognizing exceptional members of the senior class.

The Spartan Seniors program honors students who demonstrate outstanding academic achievement alongside a strong commitment to school spirit, dedication, and character. These distinguished students have consistently exemplified what it means to be a true Spartan, participating in a wide range of sports, clubs, and activities while maintaining high academic standards.

Their contributions both in the classroom and within the school community set them apart as exemplary role models.

Wyoming Valley West's December Seniors of the Month are Ava Yancey, Gabbi Novitski, Nora Zekas, and Leona Ahmetaj.

Rotary Club of Plymouth gains new member



Submitted Photo
The Rotary Club of Plymouth recently installed Laura Keller as a new member in the club. Keller serves as the Librarian at the Plymouth Public Library. The Rotary Club of Plymouth conducts fundraisers and supports local efforts in Plymouth and surrounding communities. Shown are Rotary President JK Karavis, District Governor-Elect and installing officer Andy Lane Chapman, Laura Keller and Eric Cheatly, sponsor.

Competition

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Rosary School in Dur-yea, St. Nicholas - St. Mary School in Wilkes-Barre, and students from Lackawanna, Bradford and Monroe counties. They can be viewed at fundraise.givesmart.com/vf/2026STREAM.

Anyone who logs on is invited to "vote" for their favorite project, at \$10 per vote. That's part of the competition, as students hope to see their totals increase. As of Friday afternoon, with four days left to vote, the website revealed Living the Stream had raised more than \$74,200.

"We checked it this morning," said Sophia Jones, who is part of a Pathfinders Team with Emily Ratchford. The girls, both eighth-grade students, said it's exciting to see votes come in for their project, which they designed to give other students suggestions for ways to earn the "service hours" they need to accumulate as they prepare to receive the sacrament of Confirmation.

Other projects completed by other teams

offer suggestions on places where people might adopt a pet, ways to exercise to get in shape for sports, and items to donate to homeless shelters. Others discuss ways an individual can consume fewer natural resources in an effort to fight climate change, or explain how some students plan to raise money for the residents of nursing homes they regularly visit.

One project that particularly impressed Hoppe came from the "God's Gospel" team of students from Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green, who designed a video game to teach younger kids the story of Noah's Ark. The game involves clicking on pictures of animals to put two — but no more than two — of each type on the ark.

"It's a modern way to tell the story," Hoppe said.

What are students learning from their Living the STREAM projects?

"Everything," he said. "Half of them had no idea how to do a video, or write a script, or operate a website, or edit a photo. Their use of technology has gone way up."

Online voting for the projects will continue through Feb. 10, and the top vote-getters will win scholarships. Student projects will also be chosen for award categories independent of fundraising and all students who meet their team fundraising goals will receive free raffle tickets for more than \$2,000 worth of donated technology prizes.

The competition will conclude with an awards ceremony at 6 p.m. on Feb. 11 at the Diocesan Pastoral Center, 330 Wyoming Ave., in Scranton, where Hoppe expects to guide visitors through interactive science activities.

Adding to the atmosphere at the awards ceremony, a news release from the Diocese of Scranton Catholic Schools Office mentioned an AI-powered roaming photo booth and plenty of hands-on activities. For refreshments, director of development and alumni relations Sandy Snyder wrote, "We'll have STREAM-themed food and drink (STREAM-bolis, for example, and a make-your-own fizzing drink bar)."

The Luzerne Foundation Community Champion of the Week



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Community Champion of the Week Earth Conservancy



For decades, the former Blue Coal lands in Luzerne County sat idle – thousands of acres damaged by pre-regulatory anthracite mining and locked in bankruptcy. In 1992, Nanticoke native and Congressman Paul E. Kanjorski proposed an ambitious experiment: create a nonprofit organization to acquire the land, repair it, and guide it toward a productive future. That idea became Earth Conservancy.



Historical image of the Huber Breaker (Northwest Side of Breaker, Rock Belt Line (foreground)) [Photograph]. Library of Congress. https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/pa2251.photos.041331p1



Historical image of the 200-acre Bliss Bank site in Nanticoke, Hanover Township, and Newport Township, prior to reclamation.

Earth Conservancy completed its purchase of the Blue Coal land – 16,500 acres – in 1994. It then launched its effort to, as Kanjorski put it, “recycle our past for a better future.” His vision, rooted in community partnership and long-term stewardship, helped establish a national model for post-industrial land reuse. The organization has since reclaimed more than 2,000 acres of mine-scarred land, restored miles of degraded streams, constructed acid mine drainage treatment systems, and preserved over 9,300 acres for trails, parks, wildlife habitat, agriculture, and open space. Of that total, more than 8,000 acres are now open to the public as part of Pennsylvania’s Pinchot State Forest, with a long-term conservation goal of 10,000 acres.

Beyond restoration, Earth Conservancy’s work focuses on long-term community benefit. The organization has developed comprehensive land-use plans, operates a large-scale composting facility, leads a variety of environmental education initiatives, and supports municipalities and local groups through mission-aligned investments in parks, recreation, infrastructure, education, and other community needs. Earth Conservancy also recognizes that environmental recovery and economic vitality are not mutually exclusive. Approximately 1,500 acres of its land have supported more than \$1 billion in private investment in the Lower South Valley, creating jobs and providing sites for commercial, industrial, and housing development.




Eliza Hunt talks with children about local ecosystems at a community environmental day event.



View of Earth Conservancy's restored Espy Run stream channel. Over one-mile of the stream was completely rebuilt.

More than 30 years after its founding, Earth Conservancy continues Congressman Kanjorski’s original vision: a long-term effort with a clear purpose and an eventual end. Significant mining scars still exist, but steady progress – made possible through persistence, innovation, and many partnerships – has shown what’s possible when damaged lands are treated as an opportunity, turning them into assets that serve communities today and strengthen the region’s future.



View of Earth Conservancy's reclaimed and redeveloped Bliss Bank project site. In the foreground is the Hanover Reservoir, part of a 1,400-acre parcel Earth Conservancy transferred over to the Pinchot State Forest.

Working together makes our community stronger. If you have a cause near to your heart and want to make a difference here in Northeastern Pennsylvania and beyond, please call us at the Luzerne Foundation or visit www.luzfdn.org for more information.

Do you want to make our community better? So do we. Let’s do it together.

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