Dear Reader,

You’d be hard pressed to find someone in the greater Wapakoneta area who hasn’t heard what native son Neil Armstrong said when he took those historic first steps on the moon:

“That’s one small step for man; one giant leap for mankind.”

People in these parts have been taking steps — both giant and small — ever since Armstrong put Wapakoneta on the map almost 50 years ago. We’ve explored our own new frontiers by advancing with technologies in manufacturing and health care, created new and improved existing businesses to meet the changing needs of our community, and adapted to the constant changes in education and agriculture to ensure we’re always the best we can be.

These advances happen because people make them happen. We see a need and we fill it. We have a dream and we make it reality. We use our talents and our skills for the betterment of our greater community. We don’t really know any different.

This is our 2018 Progress Edition. We’ve taken a riff from Armstrong’s quote to look at giant steps people and organizations in our community have made, steps that have made a positive impact on the world around us.

Today our major focus is on education and sports. Tuesday’s focus will be business and arts & entertainment; Wednesday we take a look at government, health care and agriculture.

— Deb Zwez,
Publisher
Newcomer knows how to deliver

By A.J. HECHT
STAFF WRITER

Brian Cossel has always been an active and visible face in Wapakoneta. He works for the U.S. Postal Service, carrying your mail door to door every day. He’s been a coach, working with the wrestling teams and middle school baseball teams for years.

And now, he’s a sitting member of the Wapakoneta City School District Board of Education.

Cossel was elected last November, along with Gregg Ruppert, beating out two incumbents, Willie Sammetinger and Brent Schwartz.

The campaign was a first for Cossel.

“It was nerve-wracking. I’ve never done anything like that before,” Cossel said before February’s regular Board meeting. “I had some good help along the way. It was interesting with four of us going for two positions. I didn’t know how that would turn out.”

Cossel’s new position has proved to be an awfully tall task, but he’s had plenty of help in the first two months on the job.

“We’ve only had a couple of meetings, so I’m still getting my feet wet and learning, but these guys are great,” he said. “They’ve helped me and answered any questions I’ve had, and going into it blind, it’s a whole different ballgame. It’s something I wanted to learn. I didn’t know much about the administration side and how things work and run, so it’s been very interesting.”

It’s been something that Cossel has been interested in learning for a long time, but being employed by the district precluded him from seeking a spot on the board.

“It was a conflict of interest, so I wasn’t allowed to do that,” he said. “My hours changed and I wasn’t able to coach anymore, so that piqued my interest to maybe give it...
another shot.”

There were other factors, too, that made the timing right for Cossel.

“I’ve had something to do with Wapakoneta City Schools since I’ve graduated high school in one way, shape, or form. It’s just that next step and growing,” he said. “With my son being here, it just gave me that little extra push I needed.”

“My boy, Griffin, he’s five, so he’ll be into the system soon,” he added, “so it’s just the right time for me to learn the administration side versus the athletic side.”

And even though it’s only been a few weeks, he’s learned quite a bit already.

“Going from the coaching side to the administration side, just seeing how things operate,” Cossel said. “That’s been the biggest change for me, how organized, the chain of command. There are rules and regulations, you know, just a typical board. I’ve never been on a [governing] board before, and that’s just what I wanted to learn.”

He’s also hoping to put his own stamp on the district.

“When I put my mind to doing something, I do it. I’ve got a strong work ethic. I just like to see things succeed,” Cossel said. “And in Wapakoneta, all across the board, we’ve always succeeded, from athletics to the classroom. It’s always been very successful. And I like to be a part of success.”

One way he hopes to be part of that success, is using his visibility to his advantage.

“The public sees me. And if they have a question, my door and my phone is always open, helping however I can, answer any question I can,” Cossel said, “and leaning on these guys who have been here a while, who have instructed me how things operate, how to handle phone calls and people with concerns and complaints, and to do the best job that we can do for the kids.”

And he’s wasting no time getting started.

“I’ve had a couple people come up to me while I’m delivering mail. But that’s nice. It’s always welcome. If we’re not trying to help people, then what are we here for,” he said. “That’s the biggest thing. We’re all here for the kids and we want to see them succeed, first and foremost.”
By TOM WEHRHAHN
MANAGING EDITOR

Auglaize County employers often speak of the need for a skilled workforce. And when they do, the Apollo Career Center usually comes up.

The career center, which offers both adult and high school skills training, is often called into the discussion about jobs, available workers and maintaining their skill levels.

The Apollo Career Center is located in southern Allen County, just north of Cridersville on Shawnee Road.

“Our two largest sectors are manufacturing and health care,” said Tasha Sheipline, director of adult workforce education. Also growing are fire/EMS, logistics and trucking.

Sheipline has a unique view concerning Apollo, in that she is an Apollo graduate, former Apollo instructor and has also worked as a corporate educator.

“We offer customized training and we do that from multiple directions,” Sheipline said.

“We have an advisory board that meet regularly that keeps up with changes, both in industries and student interest.”

The key to the customized training is the recent addition of two business and industry liaisons, who will work directly with local businesses to help improve Apollo’s educational programs and ensure the center is providing the highest quality programs.

Apollo also offers on-site training.

They can send students to us, or, especially if there is unique or expensive equipment involved, we will send instructors to them,” Sheipline said.

Sheipline also noted that Apollo is a lifelong network that is there when former students need it.

“They might lose a job and they’ll call us to see if they can land a new one, Sheipline said, "and sometimes they use it as an opportunity to switch careers and they can start classes in that direction."

For more information, call 866-998-2824 or www.apollocareercenter.com.

Food Service Supervisor Shelly Caudill and Cafeteria Secretary Carla Blymter offer free cookies and water at the 2017 ApolloPalooza. The event offers an opportunity to showcase the courses offered at Apollo Career Center.

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Coming into the 2017-2018 school year, Tim Pence, principal of Waynesfield-Goshen Elementary and district superintendent Chris Pfister felt like they were missing out on some opportunities in the classroom.

After meeting and discussing with staff members, the faculty felt like they could work an emphasis on writing into the curriculum, not just in the typical classes, but throughout all subjects.

For a little help, they brought in some experts.

Collins Education Associates, a Massachusetts based consulting firm and their Writing Program presented a way to help bring writing into every classroom.

“The Collins Program simplifies the planning of writing, making it easier to include across all areas of the curriculum,” Pence said. “Rather than just having students hone their writing skills during English and Reading classes, we’re now including writing in all subject areas including art, music, and PE.”

Part of what led Pence, Pfister and W-G Elementary toward Collins was familiarity.

Pfister spent 15 years at Apollo Career Center as their superintendent, and in his time there also brought in Collins to help revamp their writing curriculum.

“It was phenomenal,” Pfister said. “I absolutely believe in the Collins writing program.”

Pfister and the rest of the staff brought in Collins 15 years ago in an effort to have students reading and writing at a higher level.

“We started adding reading and writing across all curriculum,” he said. “Every employee in the building was involved.”

It’s been a similar process in Waynesfield.

“Our trainer [Kristine Gibson] has spent most of her time working with our teachers,” Pence said. “She introduced our staff to the program and provided them with simple activities they could start using with students immediately. She returned in October where she modeled lessons in various classrooms. Staff observed her teaching lessons and met with her later in the day to receive feedback and ask questions. Then our trainer returned in January where she observed staff teaching in various classrooms.”

One of the concepts introduced in the training are ‘focus correction areas.’ The FCAs, as they are referred to, are the writing concepts the teacher wants to emphasize in each assignment.

“When the assignment goes out, the students are aware of the FCAs and what they will be graded on. Each assignment typically has 2 to 3 FCAs.

“By limiting the FCAs to 2-3 concepts, teachers are able to evaluate the writing and provide feedback to students in a timelier manner,” Pence said. “This allows teachers to provide more opportunities to write. With that added practice, our expectation is that students will improve their ability to write and become more comfortable with writing.”

If all goes as planned in Waynesfield, they’ll hopefully see results similar to the Apollo students’ accomplishments during Pfister’s tenure at the school.

Apollo, which at the time belonged to High Schools that Work, an organization of over 1,300 technical schools, provided a benchmark for growth with their biennial assessment of all member schools.

“We had that baseline date and two years to improve,” Pfister said. “After those two years we were recognized for being in the Top 50, out of 1,300 schools, in significant gains.”

The work to make
state in individual girls golf in Division II play.

In track and field, St. Marys’ Ally Angstmann was a state qualifier in the girls 300-meter hurdles and New Bremen had two state qualifiers in field events.

Aside from the number of state title won by teams in Auglaize County, 2017 was a step in the right direction for many schools, such as New Bremen for winning its first state title ever with the Cardinals volleyball team capturing the crown in November.

The Wildcats sports programs have amassed 32 state titles, with the latest one coming in December when the football program won its three championship.

The 32 titles by Minster is ranked seventh-most in the state and just three behind Cleveland St. Ignatius.

Aside from its three state titles in football, Minster has the most state championships in girls cross-country with 11 and the most state titles in girls track and field with 12. Those combined are more than every school in the state of Ohio except for 19 schools alone.

St. Marys, on the other hand, captured its fifth state title last March in boys bowling and was the first state title won by a St. Marys team since 2011.

St. Marys is ahead of other Western Buckeye League schools such as Bath, Elida, Kenton, Wapakoneta and Celina.

The New Bremen Cardinals won their school’s first state title ever in November.

Writing From Page 6

those gains, however, won’t stop at the end of this school year.

“We’ll continue working with our representative from the Collins Writing Program in the future,” Pence said. “Once teachers have completed their training this school year, they will be well-equipped to continue implementing the program in the future and will always have access to our trainer.”

And once the program is fully implemented, Pence says, the school should expect to see those improvements. “Reading and writing are closely connected,” he said. “As students become more fluent in their ability to write, we anticipate a positive impact on their ability to read and vice-versa.”

Pfister is pretty sure of it, too.

“The Collins Writing Program works,” he said. “It’s powerful and it makes a difference.”
Local athletes see successful year

By JAKE DOWLING
STAFF WRITER

Local athletics in Auglaize County took a step in the right direction this past year. Teams in Auglaize County won six state championships in their respective sports, which happens to be the fourth-most county to win state titles.

Every sport sponsored by the OHSAA was included in the research except lacrosse, gymnastics and field and ice hockey, since none of sports are represented locally.

Individuals from schools are also included in factoring in state championships, but only for golf and tennis. It does not include individual state champions in track and field, wrestling or swimming and diving.

According to the research, Cuyahoga County led the state with 13 OHSAA state titles, followed by Franklin County with nine title and Summit County for third with six state titles, which is home of the Akron-area schools and the five state titles by Auglaize County.

Hamilton County, home of the Cincinnati-area schools, finished tied with Auglaize with five state titles and Montgomery County, home of Dayton-area school, finished with four.

Area counties such as Mercer had two schools win state titles, while Shelby and Darke counties each garnered one state title each.

Not factored into the research but something to keep in mind is the fact that The Evening Leader's coverage schools were also close to more state titles.

The Minster girls track and field team finished as runners-up to Anna in the final track event of day two of the state competition. Anna represents Shelby County's lone state title win.

The Minster girls basketball team was another team that finished close to, at least state competition, when the Wildcats lost to Jackson Center in a Division IV regional final.

The area also had a number of state qualifiers, such as two divers from St. Marys, a St. Marys bowler from the girls team and senior golfer Jill Schmitmeyer, who finished tied for second in the individual state championships in track and field, wrestling or swimming and diving.

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