



# EAGLE GAZETTE

WINTER 2024



## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

BY GABBY FISHER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The holiday season is often portrayed as a time of joy, celebration, and togetherness. However, for many, it can also be a challenging period filled with stress, heightened emotions, and unmet expectations. For children and adolescents, these pressures can sometimes manifest in mental health struggles, including depression. As parents, guardians, and educators, it's essential to stay attuned to the emotional well-being of the young people in our lives during this time.

While the holidays bring excitement, they can also disrupt routines, create financial stress, and highlight family tensions or losses. For some children, the absence of loved ones, social isolation, or life pressures looming over winter break can lead to feelings of sadness or anxiety. These emotions may be intensified for those already grappling with mental health issues.

One of the best ways to support children and teens is to maintain open and honest communication. Encourage your child to share their feelings, and let them know it's okay to feel sad, anxious, or overwhelmed. Create a safe space where they feel heard and validated. Sometimes, just listening without judgment can make a significant difference. It's important to recognize the signs of depression, which may not always be as apparent in young people as they are in adults. Be on the lookout for:

- Mood changes: Persistent sadness, irritability, or feelings of hopelessness.
- Behavioral changes: Withdrawal from friends and family, loss of interest in activities they once enjoyed.
- Academic difficulties: Decline in school performance or lack of motivation.
- Physical symptoms: Frequent complaints of headaches, stomachaches, or fatigue without a clear medical cause.
- Sleep disturbances: Sleeping too much or too little, or difficulty falling or staying asleep.
- Changes in appetite: Noticeable weight gain or loss due to increased or decreased eating.
- Low energy: Lack of enthusiasm or noticeable fatigue.
- Talk of self-harm or death: Any mention of self-injury, suicide, or feeling like a burden should be taken very seriously.

If you notice these signs, it's essential to seek support promptly. Speak with your child's doctor, school counselor, or a mental health professional to develop a plan for care.

How can you help?

- Keep routines stable: As much as possible, maintain consistent daily schedules to provide a sense of normalcy.
- Encourage healthy habits: Promote regular physical activity, balanced meals, and adequate sleep.
- Limit stressors: Avoid over-scheduling holiday activities and respect your child's limits.
- Model self-care: Children often learn by observing adults. Show them it's important to take breaks and prioritize mental health.
- Stay connected: Spend quality time together as a family. Activities like baking, watching movies, or playing games can strengthen bonds and lift spirits.
- Reach out for help by contacting your child's counselor, supports, or call Juniata Valley Crisis at 1-800-929-9583.

Wishing you all the happiest holidays ahead,

*Ms. Gabby*

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## IMPORTANT

## DATES:

**Dec 23 - Jan 1** - Winter Break

**Jan 16** - End of 2nd MP

**Jan 17** - No School!

**Jan 20** - No School!

(Observing MLK Day)

**Feb 14** - 12:30 Dismissal

**Feb 17** - No School!

(Observing Presidents Day)

**March 10** - No School!

**March 25** - End of 3rd MP

Be sure to check us out online at [www.soaringheightsschool.com](http://www.soaringheightsschool.com) for school menu and calendar.

### *Always Striving To Do Better*

We are always trying to strive for high quality programming in our school. As part of that process, it is sometimes necessary to make some changes to our program and classrooms to ensure that we are providing the best experience for all of our students. Because we are currently seeing an increase in our referrals for students with communication needs, we have decided to create a TEACCH model classroom to support students with verbal communication needs. This change did require us to make some classroom changes for some of our students so if your kiddo mentions this, they are probably right. As always, please reach out with any questions and concerns you have.



**If your child is in need of winter clothes, hats, or gloves, please let us know. If your family would benefit from a box of non-perishable food, please reach out!**

## Happy Retirement, Ms. Gerry



It is with mixed emotions that we announce the retirement of our beloved Clinical Specialist, Ms. Gerry. After 5+ years of dedicated service, Gerry is stepping into a well-deserved retirement, leaving behind a legacy of care, compassion, and unwavering support for our students, staff, and families. Throughout her tenure at SHS, Ms. Gerry has been more than a counselor—she has been a guiding light for so many. Her warm smile, listening ear, and wise advice have helped countless students navigate challenges, celebrate successes, and discover their true potential. Her impact reaches far beyond the walls of our school, touching lives in ways that will be remembered for years to come.

We are incredibly grateful for Ms. Gerry's contributions to our school. She has been a steady presence, always going above and beyond to ensure the well-being and success of every student she worked with.

While we will deeply miss seeing her in the hallways and at school events, we are excited for Ms. Gerry as she begins this next chapter of her life. We know she has many wonderful plans ahead, from spending more time with family to pursuing her hobbies and traveling.

Please join us in celebrating Gerry and her incredible career. Feel free to send your well-wishes, memories, or messages of gratitude to Gabby at [gfisher@pyramidhc.com](mailto:gfisher@pyramidhc.com). The students had the chance to say "see ya later" to Ms. Gerry on November 26th and all shared that they hope she comes to visit often.

**Thank you, Gerry, for your years of service and dedication. You have made an indelible mark on SHS Mifflin, and you will always be a cherished part of our family.**

## SHS STAFF SPOTLIGHT



This issue of the SHS Staff Spotlight goes to Ms. Ashlin! Ms. Ashlin is new to the SHS team this year. Ms. Ashlin lives with her husband, Richie and her two dogs, Jack and Zoe. At SHS, Ms. Ashlin teaches in our Intensive Communication Classroom that primarily serves our students with autism and other communication needs. Prior to working at SHS, she gained lots of experience working with students as a Manager for Raystown Developmental Services. In her spare time, she enjoys watching reality TV shows, hunting, and attending races. She is excited to be welcoming a new baby boy into her family this spring. We are thrilled to have Ms. Ashlin as a part of the SHS team!