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### Armstrong School District Students Achieving Beyond The Classroom

**KITTANNING:** Students are often recognized for their work in the classroom through earning good grades and earning honor roll status. Recently, however, students have been achieving at high levels, outside of the classroom, in their elective courses as well, and some are moving on to high levels of competition as a result.

Over the last 14 years the TV Production program in Armstrong School District has competed in several high school video competitions, mostly being held at Robert Morris University each Spring. However, the districts Video Production program recently achieved a first. Armstrong High School students Hayley Woodside and Joey Crissman, both of which are enrolled in TV II, and as Independent Study students, produced a video entitled "Be A Hero", which was submitted for a Drug Awareness Video Competition held by the Elks. Recently that video placed first at both the regional, and state level. Both students have been invited to Harrisburg to be recognized for their video, which will be screened to over 500 people in early May. The video will then move on to the national level for competition.

The respective music departments of Armstrong and West Shamokin Jr. Sr High School's have had several students who are excelling. This year represented the highest number of choral students that Armstrong has sent to the Region II Choir. Isabel Valasek, Morgan Shellhammer, Tonya Velcko, Donavon McDonald, and Alex McAuley attended the event at McDowell High School in early March. Additionally, Valasek became the first Armstrong student to advance to the State Chorus in Lancaster, PA, taking 2nd chair. This also will give her the opportunity to audition for the All-East and All-National Choirs, which will take place sometime in the Fall of 2018. Additionally, senior Anthony Murray was selected to attend the Western Region Orchestra Festival, which took place at Sharon High School, and was selected to move on to the State Orchestra Festival, which is held in Lancaster in April.

Several band students joined their choral counterparts in excellence as well. This year Armstrong High School hosted the District 3 PMEA Band Festival, which included over 30 schools, and saw 14 AHS band member participate. Of those 14 members, 11 qualified for Region II Band, which was held at West Shamokin High School this year, and five placed first chair. West Shamokin High School also had three students place in District Band, Chance Wesner, Tori Drahos, Madison Uncapher, and Cecilia Long, with Wesner also advancing to Region II Band.



*AHS Students who qualified for the Region II Band Festival, from left to right: Denali John, Noah Soloski, Taylor Mercatell, Alex Sidora, Brenden Fetterman, Donovan Jack, Sara Burk, Anthony Murray, Cereese Blose, Eva Crawford (not pictured, Josie Eckman)*

Hosting the Region Band Festival is no easy task, and band Director Laura Strayer had a lot of help from her students when hosting the event this year, which saw 155 students and 55 band directors, attend the three day festival.



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Students Cody Cox, Hailey Bradeis, Parker Meredieth, Madison Shoop, Kyleigh Odooso, Martina Houser, Emilee Johnston, Christopher Prifti, and Clayton Houser were instrumental in helping the event go off without a hitch.

Strayer also wanted to recognize the growth of a new Jazz Band at West Shamokin, which first started up during the 2016-2017 school year. During its first year the band was composed of just eight students, but has grown to 23 students during the 2017-2018 school year.

In addition to Music students, the AHS Quizbowl team was also successful this year. The Varsity team placed second, and JV team first, in the Indiana County Academic League (ICAL). By placing in the top two in their regional tournament, the team qualified to compete over Memorial Day Weekend in the national NAQT tournament in Atlanta, Georgia. While in this tournament, AHS will send a team of four students (Seth Schall (Captain), Donovan Jack, Nolan Turko, and Ben Yankasky) to compete against over 330 teams from all 50 states, China, a few other countries.

Look for feature articles of all of these accomplishments in the Leader Times on Monday's in April.