

Forest Area School District Newsletter

2026-2027 School Year

A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT:

I hope you are enjoying a wonderful summer and finding opportunities to relax and spend quality time with family and friends. Across the district, summer programs and camps have been keeping students engaged and active, and our Summer Playground Program is in full swing. Please be sure to check this newsletter for a reminder of playground dates, times, and locations.

As we look ahead to the 2026–2027 school year, I would like to share some important district news.

Mrs. Arner announced her retirement after many years of dedicated service as principal. On behalf of the Board of Education, faculty, staff, students, and community, I would like to congratulate Mrs. Arner on a job well done and thank her for her dedication. Her leadership, commitment, and care for students have made a lasting impact that will be felt for many years to come.

At the June Board of Education meeting, it was announced that, following Mrs. Arner's retirement, Mr. Luke Alex will assume the role of District-Wide Principal effective July 1, 2026. Mr. Alex is a proud Forest Area graduate who has dedicated his career to education as both a teacher and leader. His knowledge of our district, our students, and our community will help ensure a smooth transition.

To maintain a strong administrative presence on both campuses, a rotating schedule has been developed to ensure that a member of the administrative team, Mr. Alex, Miss Stover, Mrs. Pospisil, or Mrs. Beers, will always be available on each campus. Additionally, Mrs. Misty Hartle will join Mr. Alex as a District-Wide Head Teacher, providing additional support to the administrative team. Mrs. Hartle's schedule will generally complement Mr. Alex's, ensuring consistency and support.

I would also like to take a moment to remind families about the start time adjustment for the 2026–2027 school year. Beginning this fall, school doors will open at 8:10 a.m., which means bus pick-up times will be slightly later than in previous years. The end of the school day will remain the same. As we prepare for another exciting school year, I am grateful for the continued support of our families, staff, and community members.

I wish you and your family a safe, enjoyable, and relaxing remainder of the summer.

Warm regards,

Mrs. Beers

SUMMER 2026

Newsletter Highlights

MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUMMER LEARNING & ENRICHMENT

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT & RECOGNITION

STUDENT LIFE, LEARNING & EXPERIENCES

AMERICA 250

FEATURED ALUMNI

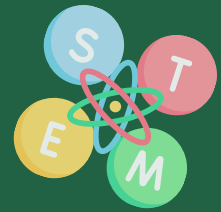
RETIREMENT

2026 SUMMER PLAYGROUND PROGRAM

DISTRICT REMINDERS & SPORT UPDATES



SUMMER LEARNING & ENRICHMENT



Summer STEM Program Ends with a Sweet Adventure

The Forest Area School District Summer STEM Program recently wrapped up a fantastic week of learning and exploration. To celebrate their hard work, 25 students enjoyed an exciting field trip to Hersheypark and ZooAmerica.

Throughout the week, students participated in a variety of hands-on STEM activities. They explored basic economic concepts, traced the origins of ingredients used in Hershey's chocolate products, created North American animal dioramas, and took on the role of community leaders by managing their own towns as "mayors." Along the way, students also learned about the life and legacy of Milton Hershey and the impact of his vision on the surrounding community.

The program provided engaging opportunities for students to build knowledge, develop critical-thinking skills, and connect classroom learning to real-world experiences.



Envirothon

West Forest 9th grade and Envirothon students recently celebrated Earth Day with a field experience at Cook Forest State Park. Throughout the day, students engaged in a variety of hands-on activities, including presentations on local wildlife and interactive lessons focused on tree identification. They also explored a nearby creek, discovering and learning about the diverse species that inhabit the ecosystem. Congratulations to Esther Forker, Bobby Payne, Ethan Beach, and Natalie Wagner for earning first place at the Tri-County Pennsylvania Envirothon competition. The team also achieved the highest score in the aquatics category. Outstanding!



Pictured with our winning team are Coach Brown and Commissioner Kingston. 🏆

Summer Camp Adventures

Students enjoyed exciting opportunities for hands-on learning and teamwork through this summer's Space Camp and LEGO Camp programs, offered through the Warren-Forest Higher Education Council (Hi-Ed), and the J. Bowman Proper Trust

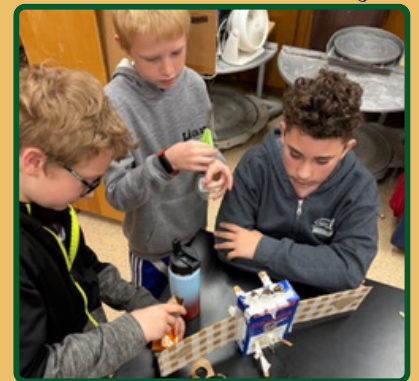
During Space Camp, participants explored the world of space exploration by designing and launching missions, working together to solve team challenges, and learning about the science behind space travel. A highlight of the camp was a field trip to the Challenger Learning Center in Allegany, New York, where students took part in an immersive space-themed educational experience.

At LEGO Camp, students combined creativity, engineering, and technology as they built and programmed LEGO robots. Campers participated in a variety of STEM challenges and team projects that encouraged collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Students also enjoyed a visit to Forest Scientific in Tionesta, where they had the opportunity to learn about science, technology, and innovation in a real-world setting right here in Forest County.

Both camps provided engaging experiences that encouraged students to learn, explore, and have fun throughout the summer while developing valuable skills in teamwork, creativity, and innovation.



Space Camp



LEGO Camp



STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT & RECOGNITION

Valedictorian and Salutatorian

Aidan Noah Faust, East Forest Valedictorian

Aidan is the son of Janet and Brian Faust.

Aidan is on the Honor Roll at East Forest. He is a member of National Honor Society, FCCLA, and Student Council. During his senior year he received the English Award and the Presidential Education Silver Award. Aidan was also awarded several scholarships, including the Marsha L. Beichner Memorial Scholarship, Forest County Taxpayers Association Scholarship, and the Clarion Hospital Foundation Scholarship. At the Venango Technology Center, Aidan was a member of the Allied Health Occupations shop. At VTC he was the recipient of the Rotary Vocational Award and the VTC Faculty Association Outstanding Student Award.

Aidan's future plans are to go to PennWest Clarion for a bachelor's degree in nursing and work at Clarion Hospital.



Jonah Daniel Glass, East Forest Salutatorian

Jonah is the son of Dan Glass, and Kristen and Kevin Roberts. He is also the grandson of Barb Glass and Claudia Waint, and the great-grandson of Jean Goodman.

Jonah is a member of the National Honor Society and the National Technical Honor Society. He spent three years in the Heavy Equipment Shop at the Venango Technology Center (VTC), serving as a Student Ambassador and earning an Advanced NOCTI score. He has served as President and a three-time National Team member for FCCLA, as a four-year Varsity Golf athlete, and as a member of the Student Historians.

Jonah earned the American Legion Award, the Senator Scott Hutchinson Good Citizenship Award, the George Eastman Young Leader Award, and Presidential Education Gold and Silver honors. He also received several local scholarships, including the East Forest Faculty, Sports Boosters, Ron Heasley, Red Cross, Forest County Association of Township Officers, Arthur (Bud) VanNort, Katie M. Edmondson, Forest County Bigfoot Festival, and Dennis "Shipwreck" Kelly Athletic scholarships.

Following graduation, Jonah will attend Rosedale Technical College to earn an Associate Degree in Diesel Mechanics while also working to attain his CDL and various vehicle inspection licenses.



Macalie Hoffmann, West Forest Valedictorian



Macalie is the daughter of Lisa Hoffmann. ↩

She is the National Honor Society Vice President, Choir President, and Drama Club Vice President. Macalie is also a member of the Student Council, Student Historians, the Varsity Club, the Foreign Language Club, the Bible Club, FCCLA, and participated in the PMEA District Choir. While at West Forest, she also participated in golf, volleyball, and cheerleading. Macalie currently serves as one of 10 National Officers for Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) as the National Vice President of Parliamentary Law. She is also very proud to hold the title of 2025-2026 Miss Forest County.

Throughout her academic career, Macalie has received the Presidential Excellence Gold Award, Student of the Week, Lions Club Academic Scholarship, KSAC Scholarship, Forest County Republican Essay Award, Forest County Association of Township Officers Scholarship, Kinnear Memorial Scholarship, DAR Good Citizen Award, Sports Boosters Scholarship, American Red Cross Scholarship, Best Leading Actress Award, Outstanding Vocal Award, Forest Ready Certificate, Ruth and Vernon Taylor Valedictorian Award and Thomas D. Fulton Award.

Macalie's future plans are to attend The Pennsylvania State University for a Veterinary and Biomedical degree.

Esther Forker, West Forest Salutatorian



Esther is the daughter of Ben and Emily Forker. ↩

She has two siblings, Noah and Eliana Forker. Esther is the President of the National Honor Society, the President of Envirothon, the Vice President of the student council, and the class secretary. She is a member of FCCLA, Envirothon, student council, student historians, drama club, choir, foreign language club, varsity club, and book club. She participated in volleyball, club volleyball, basketball, and the Wildlife Leadership Academy. She was on the Homecoming and Prom Court.

Throughout her academic career, Esther has received the Presidential Excellence Gold Award, Student of the Week, George Eastman Young Leaders Award, Best Supporting Actress two years in a row, most improved, Defensive Player of the Year, MVP for Volleyball, third and first place in the PA Tri-county Envirothon, Sons of American Legion Athletic Scholarship, KSAC Scholarship, Kinnear Memorial Scholarship, The Russel M. Smith Scholarship, The J. Bowman Proper Scholarship, PA Fish and Boat Commission Conservation Award, and The Ruth & Vernon Taylor Salutatorian Award. She has also served on the FCCLA State Executive Council as the State First Vice President and Secretary, and she has made the national team for 4 years in a row.

Esther's future plans are to attend Washington and Jefferson College for a double major in Physics and Engineering.

Congrats!



CLASS
of
2026

Happy!
Graduation



West Forest School



Prom

Forest Area held their 2026 Prom, "Rio Masquerade," at the Flying W Ranch in Tionesta on Friday, May 1st.

East Forest crowned Jonah Glass and Jayden Colvin King and Queen. Glass is the son of Dan Glass and Kristen and Kevin Roberts. Colvin is the daughter of Rodney and Staci Colvin.

West Forest crowned Ezra Busch and Brooke Felletti King and Queen. Busch is the son of Randy and Alyce Busch. Felletti is the daughter of Raymond and Kristen Felletti.

East Forest



West Forest



STUDENT LIFE, LEARNING & EXPERIENCES



Safety Day

Forest Area students in grades 7–12 participated in a district-wide Safety Day on Friday, April 24. East Forest students traveled to West Forest for a full day of learning and collaboration. Throughout the day, students attended informative sessions on Internet safety, water safety, active intruder preparedness, and the dangers of opioid use. Representatives from the Forest County Sheriff's Department, Tionesta Ambulance Service, Abraxas, and guest speaker Chris Didier (sponsored by the Forest County Opioid Prevention Fund) led engaging presentations on a variety of important topics. The event provided valuable, real-world insights to help students stay safe and informed. To wrap up the day, students enjoyed a picnic lunch provided by the Nutrition Group.

Safety Day
Abraxas

Safety Day
Sheriff's Dept

Safety Day
Chris Didier
Guest Speaker

Safety Day Tionesta
Ambulance



Senior Trips

West Forest High School seniors recently spent three days in Washington, D.C., on their Senior Trip, experiencing many of the nation's most historic sites and landmarks. During their visit, students received private tours of the United States Capitol, the United States Senate, and the United States House of Representatives. Students also explored several iconic memorials and monuments, including the World War II Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Washington Monument. Additional stops on the trip included the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Smithsonian Institution museums, and Arlington National Cemetery. The trip provided students with an unforgettable opportunity to learn more about American history, government, and culture.

The East Forest High School Class of 2026 recently returned from a fun-filled senior class trip that gave students the opportunity to create lasting memories together before they graduated! The trip began with a visit to Pittsburgh, where students enjoyed watching the Pittsburgh Pirates. From there, the group traveled to Sandusky, Ohio, where they visited Cedar Point and Kalahari Resort.



East Forest Senior Trip



West Forest Senior Trip

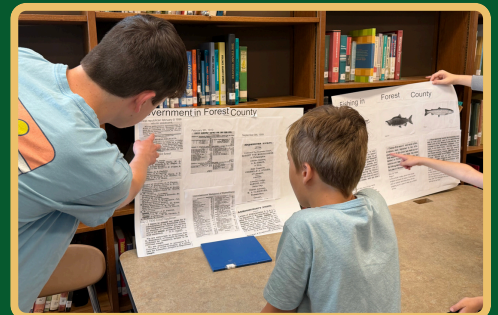


AMERICA 250: HISTORY, LEADERSHIP, AND COMMUNITY

Forest Area Students Celebrate America 250 Through History, Leadership, and Community.

Students throughout Forest Area School District recently participated in America 250 activities commemorating the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States. Through hands-on learning, student-led presentations, community partnerships, and historical exploration, students at both East Forest and West Forest connected with the people, events, and ideas that shaped our nation. A key part of the district's celebration was a partnership with the Forest County Historical Society, led by President Mary Alyce "Jake" Knauff, which helped provide students with meaningful opportunities to explore local, state, and national history.

At East Forest, the celebration began with patriotic musical selections performed by elementary students and selected high school students. Students then explored the events leading to the Declaration of Independence through a presentation by Mr. Hartwig, with students contributing quotations from influential Americans and sharing insights into significant moments in history. Throughout the day, students embraced leadership roles as teachers and presenters. High school students led educational sessions designed for elementary students, while elementary students later took center stage through a Living Museum experience, teaching high school students about notable individuals and events from America's past.



At West Forest, students and staff participated in a variety of interactive activities that brought history to life. Community members joined students and staff for a day of learning and fellowship focused on local, state, and national history. Elementary students experienced life in earlier times through quilt making, butter churning, pioneer games, and a one-room schoolhouse reenactment. Secondary students conducted projects exploring genealogy, local newspapers, community interviews, and regional history, strengthening their understanding of the stories and people that have shaped both Forest County and the nation.

While each school approached the celebration in its own unique way, both events shared a common goal: helping students better understand America's history while building leadership, communication, collaboration, and critical-thinking skills. The America 250 activities showcased the creativity of our students, the dedication of our staff, and the strong connections between our schools and the communities they serve.

FEATURED ALUMNI



East Forest: East Forest High School is proud to recognize Alicia Ponegalek as this year's Distinguished Alumnus. Alicia is a 2008 graduate of East Forest High School, where she was the Valedictorian and a standout member of the varsity basketball team, scoring 1,274 points throughout her career. Her early experience as a student-athlete shaped her competitive mindset, leadership style, and team-first approach that continue to define her career today.

Following graduation from East Forest, Alicia attended the University of Pittsburgh and earned a bachelor's degree in political science. Throughout her time at Pitt, Alicia worked for the University's Athletic Department where she supported ticket sales, donations, and worked on game days.

Today, Alicia is a Vice President at Booz Allen Hamilton, an advanced technology firm, leading growth and strategy, where she focuses on expanding technology and product-driven solutions within the Department of Veterans Affairs. She specializes in business development to deliver mission-driven outcomes. Known for aligning innovation with customer needs, Alicia has played a key role in scaling capabilities and driving significant growth across federal health portfolios. She is passionate about healthcare technology and improving outcomes for our Nation's Veterans.

Alicia spends most of her time in Satellite Beach, Florida, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, but travels back to Marienville to visit family often. She has a 17.5-year-old dog, named Mickey, who travels all over with her.

Alicia's accomplishments, leadership, and dedication to her profession reflect the values of East Forest High School. We are proud to recognize her as the 2026 Distinguished Alumna and congratulate her on this well-deserved honor.



West Forest: West Forest High School is proud to recognize Patrick L. Busch, a member of the West Forest High School Class of 1999, as this year's Distinguished Alumnus.

After graduating from West Forest, Patrick attended Clarion University, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Library and Information Science as well as degrees in English Literature and Athletic Coaching and Training. He graduated from Clarion in 2004 and began his professional career in Washington, D.C., serving as an elementary librarian at Aidan Montessori School. During this time, he continued his education and earned a Master of Science in Library and Information Science with a concentration in School Library Media from The Catholic University of America. Patrick also worked as an employee benefits and tax law librarian for a Washington, D.C., law firm.

In 2013, he married his wife, Hilary, a fellow West Forest graduate from the Class of 2000. Together they have two children, Rowan and Avery. In 2016, Patrick and his family returned to Clarion County, where they continue to make their home. He joined Keystone Junior-Senior High School as a Library Media Specialist and teacher and has dedicated the past nine years to supporting student learning and achievement.

Outside of school, Patrick enjoys being close to his family and the area where he grew up. In his free time, he enjoys playing sports with his wife and children, hiking with his dog, riding his motorcycle and side-by-side, grilling out, and, of course, reading and listening to books.

Patrick's accomplishments, commitment to education, and dedication to his community reflect the values of West Forest. We are honored to recognize him as the 2026 Distinguished Alumnus and congratulate him on this well-deserved recognition.



CELEBRATING A CAREER OF SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP



Forest Area School District proudly recognizes and celebrates the retirement of East Forest Principal, Mrs. Debra Arner. After earning a master's degree in Criminology in 1981 and later completing an Educational Specialist degree in School Psychology in 2000, Mrs. Arner dedicated a career to supporting children, families, and communities through a variety of roles in education, mental health, social services, and law enforcement.

Before entering public education, Deb served as a police officer with the Clarion Borough Police Department, an adult probation officer with Clarion County, and an adjunct faculty member at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, teaching courses in criminology and criminal justice. A commitment to helping others led to positions with SAFE (Stop Abuse for Everyone), Clarion County Children and Youth Services, Clarion Psychiatric Center, and the Clarion County Counseling Center, where she supervised child and adolescent outpatient services. From 1997 to 2005, Mrs. Arner established and operated a wraparound program through Personal Touch in Clarion, providing therapeutic services and behavioral support to dozens of children and families throughout the region.

In 2000, Deb began a career in public education as a school psychologist with Cranberry Area School District before joining Brookville Area School District in 2003. During eight years at Brookville, she served as a K-2 School Psychologist, Special Education Department Head, and Local Education Agency (LEA) representative.

Mrs. Arner joined the Forest Area School District as School Psychologist and Special Education Coordinator before transitioning to the role of Principal in February 2013. Over the past thirteen years as principal, Mrs. Arner has provided steady leadership, unwavering support for students and staff, and a commitment to creating a positive learning environment for all. Throughout a distinguished career, she has remained focused on serving others and advocating for the success and well-being of children.

The Forest Area School District community extends its sincere gratitude for the years of dedicated service and leadership. Thank you, Mrs. Arner!



We will
miss!
you



Best
wishes
to you



DISTRICT REMINDERS & UPDATES



Credit Reduction

At a recent meeting, the Forest Area School Board approved updates to high school graduation requirements that will gradually reduce the total number of credits needed to graduate, from 28 to 27 for the Class of 2027, 26 for the Class of 2028, and 25 for the Class of 2029 and beyond. Forest Area's previous requirement of 28 credits was the highest among neighboring districts, and these changes bring the district more in line with regional expectations while also aligning with the revised school day schedule.

Families should know that these adjustments do not reduce the rigor of a Forest Area education. Students will continue to complete core coursework in English, math, science, and social studies and meet all Pennsylvania requirements, including college and career readiness activities, Keystone Exam expectations, and state-approved graduation pathways. The updated structure ensures students remain well prepared for postsecondary education, training, or the workforce while balancing a realistic and supportive academic workload.

Class of 2027 = 27 Credits

Class of 2028 = 26 Credits

Class of 2029 = 25 Credits

School Day Start Time Adjustment

Beginning in the upcoming school year, Forest Area School District will implement a revised daily schedule, with student arrival time moving from 7:45 a.m. to 8:10 a.m. This adjustment is designed to better support student readiness for learning while maintaining a full instructional day. Families can expect additional details regarding transportation schedules and building-specific routines to be shared prior to the start of the school year. We encourage parents and guardians to begin planning for this change as we work to ensure a smooth transition for all students.

Starting Fall 2026, the school day start time for students will be 8:10 am.

Changes to School Calendar

Forest Area School District will be transitioning from an hours-based calendar to a days-based calendar beginning in the upcoming school year. Previously, the district met state requirements through a minimum number of instructional hours (900 hours for elementary students and 990 hours for high school students). Moving forward, the district will provide 180 days of instruction for all students.

This change ensures continued compliance with state requirements while providing greater consistency and predictability for families when planning around the school year. Additional details, including the finalized school calendar and key dates, will be shared with families in advance of the new school year.

In Fall 2026, the Forest Area calendar will have 180 instructional days for all students.

Summer Sports Update

Mandatory varsity golf practice starts **August 10**

Mandatory volleyball and soccer practices begin **August 17**





Forest Area School District 2026 SUMMER PLAYGROUND PROGRAM



➤ **FREE SUMMER FUN FOR STUDENTS AGES 7-13!** ➤



LOCATIONS

- East Forest (EF)
- West Forest (WF)



PROGRAM HOURS

10:00 AM – 2:00 PM
(Monday – Friday)

CALENDAR

A calendar with daily activities will be sent out for June, July, and August.



WHAT TO EXPECT

- Supervised outdoor play and activities
- FREE lunch provided (must attend morning session)
- Field trips (permission slips required)
- Safe, structured environment for summer fun!



INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

The playground will close immediately if:

- The National Weather Service issues a thunderstorm or tornado warning; OR
- Thunder, lightning, or heavy rainfall occurs.



Parents must have a pickup plan in place.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- ★ Registration is required.
- ★ This is NOT a babysitting service.
- ★ Children may come and go. Parents should have a plan.
- ★ Leaders arrive at 10:00 AM and remain until 2:00 PM only.
- ★ All laws and rules related to being on school property must be followed.
- ★ Playgrounds close during severe weather.



CONTACTS



West Forest (WF)
(814) 755-3302



East Forest (EF)
(814) 927-6688



SUMMER PLAYGROUND RULES

- Registration required.
- Respect leaders and follow directions.
- Ages 7-13. Drop-in program.
- No weapons, nicotine products, or drugs (including look-alikes).
- No climbing undesignated structures.
- No jumping/standing on tables or benches.
- No throwing sticks, stones, etc.
- No vandalism.
- Return equipment in good condition.
- No bullying, harassment, or threats.
- No pets (service animals permitted).
- Children under 7 must be supervised.
- Follow bus rules.
- Staff cannot distribute medication.
- No discrimination.
- Attend only registered activities.



CONSEQUENCES FOR RULE VIOLATIONS

- ★ First Offense: Warning, time-out, or removal.
 - ★ Second Offense: 3-day suspension.
 - ★ Third Offense: Suspension for the season.
- Serious offenses may accelerate consequences.



SIGN UP TODAY!

Registration forms are available through your school district office.



JOIN OUR TEAM



Now Hiring

**Substitute Teachers &
Substitute Support Service Positions**
for Forest Area School District

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Bonus Programs | Training Opportunities | 401(k)



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