

School Gram

KENMORE-TOWN OF TONAWANDA UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS



BUDGET VOTE & BOARD OF EDUCATION ELECTION

**7 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Tuesday,
May 20, 2025**

Hoover Middle School,
249 Thorncliff Road
(use the Sheridan
Drive entrance)

Budget Information:
www.ktufsd.org/budget

Candidate Information:
www.ktufsd.org/candidates

CONTENTS:

Points of Pride
Page 2-3

**Crossroads Academy
Flourishes at KJS**
Page 4

**Community Members
Recognized**
Page 5

**Grant Funds
Farm-to-School
Program**
Page 5

**Enhancements at
Aqua Lane Park**
Page 6

**Athletics Unveils
New Sports Mascot**
Page 6

**KE Pool Renamed
for Coach Herbst**
Page 8

**Budget & Vote
Information**
Page 10-12



Upwards of 1,000 people came to Kenmore Junior/Senior High School, the district's oldest school, to celebrate the building's rich history and legacy at its centennial event in September. The building originally opened in 1924, replacing the former Kenmore High School (which transitioned to Washington Elementary). The building eventually became Kenmore Middle before closing as a school in 2016. In 2023, the school officially reopened as Kenmore Junior/Senior High and is now home to the district's thriving Big Picture Program and Crossroads Academy. **Page 4**

Budget Vote & Board Election: May 20, 2025

On Tuesday, May 20th, Ken-Ton School District residents will have the opportunity to vote on the proposed 2025-26 budget during the annual Budget Vote and Board of Education Election. Voting will take place from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Tuesday, May 20th at Hoover Middle School (use the Sheridan Drive entrance). You can find detailed information regarding the vote and propositions on our website at www.ktufsd.org/budget.

The proposed 2025-26 budget includes only a 2.03% increase in the property tax levy which is below the tax cap. Keeping the tax levy increase below the cap was a major priority for the district



Sabatino Cimato,
Superintendent of
Schools



Matthew Chimera,
Board of Education
President

because we are always mindful of the impact on property tax payers. It is important to note that New York State had not adopted a final budget for the state's fiscal year at the time our proposed budget was adopted. The NYS budget determines how much state aid we receive, which is one of our most important revenue sources. However, we worked hard to make the best possible estimates based on budget deliberations to date.

We are continuing to face challenges due to increases in fixed costs that are out of our control, including inflation. Annually, these increased costs far exceed increases in NYS education aid.

Continued on Page 11

POINTS OF PRIDE

These are just some of the many achievements and accomplishments of students and staff over the past year.



Kenmore East Model United Nations Team

STUDENTS:

- With 84 different teams competing, the **Kenmore East** team won the WNY Model UN Competition for the 17th time while the **Kenmore West** team placed seventh. Ken-Ton students also won in four of seven UN committees.
- The **Kenmore West Symphonic Band, Wind Ensemble, Blue Devil Big Band, and Kenmore East Band** all won 1st place in their divisions at the 2024 Darien Lake Music Festival while Kenmore West student **Abby Holmes** earned Best Soloist and the **Blue Devil Big Band** earned Best Saxophone Section.
- Zachary Collins** from Kenmore West earned a place in the All-Eastern ensembles, which represent the best musicians across 10 East Coast states. Zachary as well as **Josephine Sturmer** from Kenmore West and **Jacob Walter and Nolan Vitko** from Kenmore East earned a place in Conference All-State (best in NYS). Another **40 students** earned a place at Area All-State (best in WNY).
- Josephine Sturmer** from Kenmore West won the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra Kids Sing Competition.
- Sydney McHugh** from Kenmore East earned a place among the best musicians in the nation as part of the Honors Performance Series which performed at Carnegie Hall.
- Olivia Weinert** from Kenmore East was an award winner at the highly competitive Daemen University All High Art Show.
- Chloe Christmann and Madison Mihalics** from Kenmore East were winners at the Villa Maria College Student Art Competition.
- Sophia Puma and Castiel Frye** from Kenmore East and **Eva Deeb and Emily Dee** from Kenmore West were winners at the Niagara PAL Fine Arts Competition.



Josephine Sturmer



Laxmi Subedi

- Laxmi Subedi** from Kenmore East won 3rd place in the NYSABE Art Contest.
- Trevor Moses-Smith** from Kenmore West was a winner in the WNY United Against Drugs & Alcohol Abuse Art Contest.
- Isabella Teter** from Kenmore West won the Regional Shakespeare Competition and classmate **Ella Roberts** was the runner-up.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CLASS OF 2024

- 73% of 493 graduates** earned at least one of the following designations: Advanced Regents Diploma, Advanced Regents with Honors, Technical Endorsement on their Regents Diploma, Seal of Civic Readiness, and Seal of Bilingualism.
- 163 graduates** earned an Advanced Regents or Advanced Regents with Honors.
- 9 students** were candidates for the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma. IB students have been accepted into some of the most selective colleges in the U.S. and can even begin college as sophomores.
- 90 students** earned a Technical Endorsement on their Regents Diploma for completing a Career & Technical Education Program, including many through the Ken-Ton Career Academies.
- 309 students** earned the NYS Seal of Civic Readiness.
- 59 students** earned the NYS Seal of Bilingualism in French, German, or Spanish.



- Nicholas Krey** of Kenmore East won 1st place out of more than 700 competitors in the virtual Junior Achievement of WNY Virtual Stock Market Challenge.
- Michael Herr** from Kenmore East was the runner-up for the WNY Junior Firefighter of the Year distinction.
- Natalie Monteleone** from Kenmore East earned the Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest honor among Girl Scouts.
- Owen Shotwell** from Kenmore East earned the Eagle Scout rank.
- Olivia Mock** from Kenmore West earned an Honorable Mention in the 2024 NPR Student Podcast Challenge.
- Sophia Vinson, Sacha Vinson, and Gage Johnson** from Kenmore West and **Mason Ham-Deveans** from Kenmore East earned a place in the Mid-Atlantic Interscholastic Sailing Association Fall Invitational.
- Joseph Edwards and Gabriel Tarantelli** from Kenmore West earned a place in the national DECA competition.



Sophia Vinson, Sacha Vinson, Gage Johnson, and Mason Ham-Deveans

POINTS OF PRIDE



Kenmore Boys Bowling

TEAMS, ATHLETES & COACHES

- The **Kenmore Boys Bowling Team** won the Section VI Division I Championship and **Michael Abendschein** from Kenmore West had the high game of the day at the state championships with a perfect 300.
- Amelia MacKinnon** from Kenmore East was the Section VI Class A champion in the 200M Freestyle and **Heather Malkiewicz** from Kenmore West was the Section VI Class A Champion in the 100M Breaststroke.
- The **Kenmore Boys Swimming & Diving Team** won the Niagara Frontier League (NFL) Championship as well as 8 individual event championships. Additionally, **Brady Garcia** from Kenmore West was the Section VI champion in the 100 Butterfly and 100 Breaststroke.
- Cailyn Willard** from Kenmore East was part of the Section VI composite bowling team which placed 3rd at states.
- The **Kenmore East Boys Ice Hockey Team** clinched the NFL Division.
- The **Kenmore East Unified Bowling Team** won the divisional championship.
- The **Girls Ice Hockey Team** once again clinched the regular season Federation Championship.



Amelia MacKinnon (top) and Heather Malkiewicz (bottom)



Girls Ice Hockey

- Kenmore West football coach **John Haynes** was named a Buffalo Bills Coach of the Week.
- Jack Johnson** from Kenmore West was named the Male Leader of the NYS Student-Athlete Advisory Committee.
- Kenmore West girls basketball coach **Jeff Martin** won the Frank A. Martin Person of the Year Award.
- 23 athletes** signed their intent to compete at the college level.
- Kenmore East** was named a NYS Public High School Athletics Association School of Excellence.



John Haynes



Jeff Martin

STAFF, SCHOOLS & DISTRICT

- Franklin Elementary Principal **Kia Evans**, Instructional Support Specialist **Mary Bieger**, and bus driver **Molly Stoll** received the WNY Educational Service Council Award of Excellence in the Administrator, Teacher, and Support Staff categories.
- Kenmore East Band Director **Phil Aguglia** was inducted into the Buffalo Music Hall of Fame and earned the Niagara Frontier Industry Education Council (NFIEC) Commitment to Education Award.
- Franklin Elementary teachers **Alex Bianchi** and **Rachel Nati** earned the 2024 Buffalo State Professional Development Schools Leadership Award.
- The **Ken-Ton School District** was awarded the Buffalo/Niagara YMCA 2024 Stewart Partnership Award for its commitment to youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility.
- Franklin Elementary** was named a National PTA School of Excellence.
- The **Ken-Ton School District** was listed among the top 100 employers (#82) in NYS on the Forbes America's Best Employers List.
- Board of Education Trustees **Karen Whitelaw** and **Lee Ann Vogt** were recognized through the NYS School Boards Association (NYSSBA) Recognition Program.



Rachel Nati and Alex Bianchi



Trustee Lee Ann Vogt (left) and Trustee Karen Whitelaw

Kenmore Junior/Senior High Celebrates 100th Anniversary

Thursday, September 27th was a very exciting day as the Ken-Ton School District celebrated the 100th anniversary of Kenmore Junior/Senior High, the district's oldest school building.

Upwards of 1,000 people attended the event which included digital and hard-copy yearbooks, live music by Kenmore East and Kenmore West students, self-guided tours, historical memorabilia and photographs, and a special presentation in the building's iconic gymnasium (affectionately known as the Pit) led by Principal Kevin Kruger and Superintendent Sabatino Cimato.

Kenmore Junior/Senior High opened in 1924. It was constructed during a time of rapid growth in Kenmore and originally served students in Gr. 7-12. The school pioneered several concepts considered to be innovations at the time including guidance, multi-track grouping of pupils, early foreign language study, student government, and extensive extracurricular programs. The building also included many impressive features for the time such as a large gymnasium, swimming pool, and 1,100-seat auditorium. It also had an apartment for the Principal complete with a bedroom, living room, dining room, and kitchen so they could live at the school (which was commonplace at the time).

Even though construction of the school dramatically increased district capacity, it wasn't nearly enough to keep pace with the growing population and there was a need for more space within only a few years. In 1928, construction began on a massive addition to the school which more than doubled its size. The addition also included a new gymnasium with balcony seating, which was soon referred to as the Pit.



Scenes from the Kenmore Junior/Senior High 100th anniversary event on September 27th, 2024. In the top right photo, State Sen. Sean Ryan, center, presents a proclamation celebrating the centennial milestone to Superintendent Sabatino Cimato, left, and Principal Kevin Kruger.

With the opening of Kenmore Senior High (now Kenmore West) in 1940, the building became Kenmore Junior High. It changed again to Kenmore Middle in the 1980s when ninth grade moved to the high schools. It closed as a school in 2016 but was given new life as the home of the district's extremely successful Big Picture Program, a non-traditional high school program.

With the introduction of new secondary programming and the expansion of Big Picture to include seventh grade, the building became a junior/senior high school once

again and officially reopened under the building's new name in 2023.

From 1924 to the early 1950s, all Ken-Ton students would have walked those halls during their junior and/or senior high school years. The students and staff here gave rise to the district's rich traditions which continued at Kenmore West and eventually Kenmore East as well. Now, this historic building is thriving once again and is known to house some of the most innovative secondary programming in WNY, providing students with multiple pathways to graduation.

Crossroads Academy Flourishes at Kenmore Junior/Senior High

During the 2023-24 school year, the Ken-Ton School District launched Crossroads Academy, a new instructional program specially designed for juniors and seniors who are not on track to graduate. Later that year, the success of the program was on full display as Crossroads Academy celebrated its very first graduating class which included 13 students as well as two additional graduates during the summer. These 15 students would not have graduated had it not been for this innovative program.

Crossroads Academy is located on the second floor of Kenmore Junior/Senior High School. The goal of the program is to empower more students to graduate on time and increase the district graduation rate. It provided new options for students who are not on track to meet NYS graduation requirements and are significantly short of the necessary credits required to earn their diploma when they reach their junior or senior year of high school.

Crossroads Academy provides a combination of in-person instruction and online credit recovery with a classroom environment that is tailored to the needs of individual students. Because this program empowers staff to create a small, intimate learning environment that is driven by each student's individual level of readiness, the staff was able to accomplish what many would consider unattainable that first year – they guided these 15 students



Seniors in Crossroads Academy's first graduating class pose for a photograph during their commencement ceremony on June 25th, 2024. to graduate with a high school diploma.

Now, the Crossroads Academy staff is looking forward to celebrating its second graduating class on Tuesday, June 24th at 5:30 p.m.

Community Members Recognized at Board Meetings

Throughout the year, Superintendent Sabatino Cimato and the Board of Education recognize members of the community with the Community Connection Award, which is presented at Board meetings. The purpose of the Community Connection Award is to distinguish those who go above and beyond in supporting the students, schools, and staff, as well as those who play a special role in the community.

Any member of the community is eligible for the award including parents and family members of current or former students, retired staff, volunteers, employers, alumni, and residents. Those who have recently received this recognition include:

• **Joseph Sorrentino & Kevin Sorrentino:**

Together, they operate Sorrentino's Sports Center, which provides important services for students/families including skate sharpening, glove re-lacing, custom lettering, varsity jackets, and more, some of which aren't available anywhere else. They are known for their excellent customer service, extensive product knowledge, and special ordering. Ken-Ton sports teams and players frequently work with Sorrentino's and they are known for being easy to work with and always ready to help when needed. Joseph Sorrentino also serves the district as a bus driver in his spare time.

• **David Peters:** David is a Kenmore West alumnus who overcame an auditory processing disorder and broke down barriers, demonstrating that students with disabilities can excel and be an active part



Community Connection Award winners are recognized by Superintendent Cimato and the Board of Education. Clockwise, from top left, Joseph Sorrentino, David Peters, and Dave Brenon.

of the school community. After graduating 16 years ago, David took a job at Tops where he continues to work to this day. David can most often be found serving as a cart attendant, but he is best known for the manner in which he goes out of his way to greet customers and make them feel welcome. David is well known for being extremely social, approachable, caring, and personable, and his ability to brighten anyone's day is legendary.

• **Dave Brenon & Jeff Rodgers:**

Together, they maintain one of the most beautiful gardens in Ken-Ton and actively welcome the community to enjoy it, not just during the Ken-Ton Garden Walk, which they help organize, but throughout the growing season. They are also known for being the



epitome of good neighbors. From providing plenty of food and refreshments for Garden Walk participants and always having treats available for people walking dogs to sharing their plants with the neighborhood, everyone who lives near Dave and Jeff consider themselves lucky to have them as neighbors.

Anyone can nominate a member of the community for this award by visiting www.ktufsd.org/nominate.

Farm-to-School Program Singled Out as Model for NYS Districts

Thanks to the Ken-Ton School District Food Service Department and a \$100,000 grant from the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets, Ken-Ton is at the forefront of groundbreaking efforts to connect schools with farms, increase the use of locally-sourced products, teach students about where their food comes from, and inspire them to eat healthier.

The Food Service Department is 100% self-sustaining with all funds generated directly from breakfast/lunch meals served to students and does not utilize any property tax revenue. Under the leadership of Director Kim Roll and Nicole Zugelder, a former physical education teacher who is in her first year as the district's Farm-to-School Coordinator, the department has been offering exciting new menu items, recipe demonstrations and taste tests in school cafeterias, classroom lessons, large-scale family events, grow towers in schools, cook kits for families, and more. Ken-Ton's efforts have been singled out as a model for school districts throughout the state.

"Most of the students are four generations removed from working on a farm," Mrs. Zugelder said. "They don't have a deep connection with the food they are eating. They don't know much about where their food originates and what happens before it gets to the grocery store.



Farm-to-School Coordinator Nicole Zugelder, center, provides samples of a new recipe during a visit by Ch. 7 reporter Maki Becker, right.

Now, there are meaningful conversations happening about school food where the kids are leading the learning."

A prime example of this work is healthy new recipes incorporating different fruits/vegetables which are being offered on a monthly basis. Leading up to this, Mrs. Zugelder travels throughout the district educating students about the ingredient, providing recipe presentations, and allowing students to sample the finished product and provide feedback. Mrs. Zugelder is also visiting classrooms to educate students about where their food comes from.

The Farm-to-School Grant is allowing the district to incorporate more locally

sourced items produced right here in NYS. It is also enhancing the Food Service Department's annual Culinary Camp, where new recipes and dishes are developed. Meanwhile, grow towers are in all middle/high schools providing ingredients and giving students a greater understanding and appreciation of the food they are trying.

The Farm-to-School Program and efforts by the Food Service Department to offer creative new recipes which students enjoy has inspired more students than ever before to take advantage of the breakfast/lunch program which, through state/federal funding, is free for all students.

Student Leaders Set Out to Improve Aqua Lane Park

A student-led effort is now underway to have an even greater impact on one of the Town of Tonawanda's greatest treasures: Aqua Lane Park.

The park is located along the Niagara River shoreline where Sheridan Drive intersects with River Road. Through the park runs the Niagara River Greenway Shoreline Trail, a paved path which connects Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. The Ken-Ton School District has adopted this section of the trail with students/staff regularly cleaning and maintaining it throughout the year as a community service initiative.

Between Aqua Lane Park and Grand Island are three ecologically significant islands in the Niagara River commonly referred to as Strawberry Island, Tern Island, and Motor Island. Throughout the year, these islands are home to a variety of species of migratory birds such as Bald Eagles, Great Egrets, Common Terns, and Great Blue Herons. Thanks to a district-led initiative in partnership with the Town of Tonawanda, Rotary Club of Kenmore, and Niagara River Greenway, Aqua Lane Park



Charlotte Brach, left, and Alexis Casselman

is now home to viewfinders which allow guests to observe the habitats as well as signage with information about the birds that nest there and a beautiful bench for guests to enjoy.

In these ways, students and staff have already enhanced the park, but student leaders have set out to have an even greater impact. Through the coordination of the two student representatives on the Board of Education, Charlotte Brach from Kenmore

West and Alexis Casselman from Kenmore East, the District Leadership Council (DLC) is taking this on as a long-term project.

DLC is composed of student leaders from all five middle/high schools. Charlotte and Alexis run this group with the help of Superintendent Sabatino Cimato and Board of Education President Matthew Chimera and its purpose is to encourage student voice and leadership. This year, they collectively decided to focus DLC's efforts on connecting with the community and giving back.

"Community connection is really important and this is one way we as a group and our school district can connect with our community," Charlotte and Alexis told student leaders at a recent DLC meeting. "We want to brainstorm and plan a continuous project that the DLC can really take hold of in order to develop this area on the Niagara River Greenway."

After coming up with many different ideas on how they could further improve Aqua Lane Park, the group will meet later this year to refine its long-term plans.



Athletics Department Unveils New Logo for Combined Sports

The Athletics Department under the leadership of Athletic Director Lindsay Bergman unveiled a new logo for combined sports such as Field Hockey, Boys and Girls Swimming, Rifle, Wrestling, Girls Ice Hockey, Boys Volleyball, Boys and Girls Lacrosse, and Girls Flag Football. Traditionally, athletic teams which are not specific to one high school and include both Kenmore

East and Kenmore West students have utilized different variations of a DevilDog as their logo. Now, these teams have a brand new standardized logo, which combines elements of the Kenmore West Blue Devil and the Kenmore East Bulldog, to call their own.

Exhibit by Ken-West Art Teacher Inspires School-Wide Initiative

On March 6th, Kenmore West High School students attended a very special presentation led by art teacher Richard Tomasello, a longtime artist who has been exhibiting his artwork regionally and nationally since 2011. His latest exhibition, "CHOOSE," was the focus of the morning assembly.

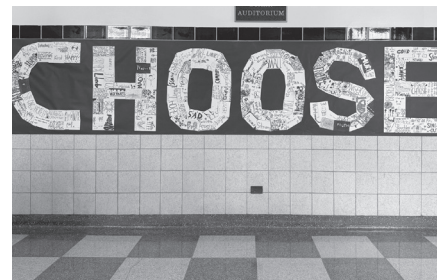
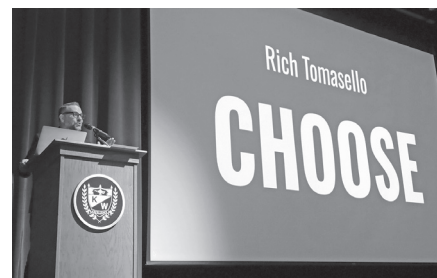
The central theme behind CHOOSE is taking a traumatic event and turning it into something positive, which is what Tomasello has done with his art following his own traumatic experience when he was in college.

"A lot of the art that I make can be traced back to that event in some way," Mr. Tomasello said. "It's about the difference between being a bystander and being an upstander."

Mr. Tomasello encouraged students to talk about their feelings and to know it's okay to be sympathetic and empathetic towards others.

"CHOOSE is an anti-bullying presentation through the lens of art and creativity, without calling it an anti-bullying presentation," Mr. Tomasello said. "It's all about waking up each day and deciding what kind of person you're going to be."

Following the assembly, each student received an index card to write or draw something related to a time they were picked on, a time they helped someone or someone helped them, an



Top, Richard Tomasello presents to Kenmore West students on March 6th. Bottom, the artwork which was eventually displayed outside the auditorium.

image that reflects their feelings about a particular experience, how they are currently feeling, or what it means to choose what type of person they want to be. These were combined into a beautiful piece of artwork which was displayed outside the Kenmore West auditorium.

NASA Moon Tree Comes to Franklin

The Franklin Elementary and Middle School Complex is now home to a NASA Moon Tree thanks to the work of seventh-grade science teacher Lisa Valle and her students.

The American sycamore sapling, which was planted on May 15th, was grown from a seed that was sent to the Moon and back. It was one of only 50 such trees distributed nationwide through NASA and the U.S. Forest Service last spring. The sapling has been planted and secured in a metal enclosure near the Franklin playground behind the school with special precautions taken to protect it as it grows.

"I hope that, just like this Moon Tree reaching for the stars, may all of my students continue to grow strong and resilient, while shining brightly and making our Earth a better place," Mrs. Valle said during the dedication.

Tree seeds were flown aboard the Orion spacecraft during NASA's unmanned Artemis I mission in 2022 and returned 25 days later. The seeds traveled hundreds of thousands of miles through space and orbited the moon several times as the Orion spacecraft traveled farther away from Earth than any surface-returning human-rated spacecraft in history.

NASA provided educational organizations the opportunity to apply to receive one of the



Franklin Middle science teacher Lisa Valle and her students pose with the NASA moon tree.

newest generation of Moon Trees and Mrs. Valle successfully applied for one of the first 50 saplings. This was in large part thanks to her participation in a nationwide NASA activity earlier that year. She then worked in partnership with Lowes, which donated materials for the construction of a metal fence to enclose the sapling, as well as the Buildings & Grounds Department led by Director of Facilities Tim Ames and Assistant Director David Celotto, which constructed the fence, prepared the site, and planted the tree. Mr. Ames also consulted with Davey Tree, which provided guidance in planting and protecting the tree, while U&S Services donated a security camera as a precaution.

'Leaving to Learn' Program Provides Career Exploration for Big Picture Middle Schoolers

Through experiences dubbed "Leaving to Learn," seventh- and eighth-grade students in the Big Picture Program at Kenmore Junior/Senior High School are getting the chance to expand their horizons, explore different career opportunities, develop workplace skills, and give back to the community, all at the same time.

Real-world learning is an essential component of the Big Picture Program. Every Tuesday and Thursday, students in Gr. 9-12 spend several hours at internship sites getting exposure to a number of different job areas while gaining essential skills that will help them be successful no matter what their future career path. With Big Picture having been expanded to include eighth grade and seventh grade, an option was needed for these students as well.

That's where Leaving to Learn comes in. It is a unique initiative created for the younger students in the Big Picture middle school program. It helps prepare them for their first internship experiences, but it does a lot more than that. Through these weekly field trips, students have the chance to get out into the community and learn about the history of Ken-Ton and Western New York as well as a multitude of organizations and many different career areas.



Big Picture Middle School students visit the Buffalo History Museum.

Past visits have included Ken-Ton Meals on Wheels, local food pantries, the Teacher's Desk, West Side Community Center, Blackrock Books, Reinstein Woods, Evangola State Park, homeless shelters, refugee centers, fire departments, Niagara Power Vista, Connect Life, Twin City Ambulance, Buffalo History Museum, the Buffalo AKG Art Gallery, Chestnut Ridge Park, and the Tonawanda Municipal Building.

Through these visits, students begin to develop various skills they will need to be successful at their future internships. They also get the chance to give back and volunteer at a variety of local non-profit organizations which work to make the community a better place.

Schools Upgraded Through Ongoing Capital Project

We are continuing to see significant improvements through the ongoing Capital Project.

Kenmore East received a new, more secured main entrance; new visitor parking area; new bus loop and pick-up/drop-off lane to improve traffic flow and safety; enhancements to the facade; new tennis courts; a redesigned parking lot; new water pipes to improve drinking water quality; and new lights for the recently renovated athletic field.

Edison and Hoover Elementary both received classroom additions; a more secured entrance; new water pipes; and enhancements to improve traffic flow/safety (a new bus loop and pick-up/drop-off lane at Edison and a new pick-up/drop-off loop at Hoover).

Lindbergh Elementary will soon receive a new, more secured entrance; new water pipes; and a reconfigured main office layout.

Other highlights include finally moving forward with enhanced camera installation at all remaining school buildings and continued upgrades to PA and door access systems for enhanced safety and security.



From top to bottom, the new Kenmore East main entrance, entrance to the Hoover Elementary addition, and entrance to the Edison addition.

Kenmore East Pool Named in Honor of Coach Lee Herbst

On Friday, January 20th, the Kenmore East High School natatorium was officially renamed in honor of legendary swimming coach Lee Herbst.

The ceremony was attended by dozens of Mr. Herbst's relatives, Ken-Ton staff, and former students whose lives were deeply impacted through his leadership.

Mr. Herbst spent 29 years as a Ken-Ton School District swimming, diving, and soccer coach. He became Kenmore East's head swimming coach in 1972 and that year, the team earned its first Niagara Frontier League (NFL) championship. He went on to lead Kenmore East to four undefeated seasons and five NFL championships while training and guiding numerous All-Americans and

five state champions. He also founded the Titans Swim Club beside Kenmore West swimming coach Bob Pufpaff.

He served as President of the WNY Swim Coaches Association from 1972 to 1976. He also served as a swim official for nearly three decades in addition to serving as President of the NFL Swim Officials Association several times. Additionally, he was an American Red Cross Instructor for lifeguarding, CPR/AED, and first aid, training and certifying hundreds of people in WNY.

Most significant of all was Mr. Herbst's profound impact on the lives of countless individuals who had him as a coach and teacher.



Former Coach Lee Herbst

Independent Health Foundation Helps Bring 'Fit Lab' to Hoover

Earlier this year, Hoover Elementary School celebrated the grand opening of its new Fit Lab, which is helping students develop healthy habits that will last a lifetime.

The Fit Lab encompasses Hoover Elementary's Wellness Room, which is adjacent to the gymnasium. Thanks to the Independent Health Foundation, the room is now outfitted with artwork from the foundation's Fitness for Kids challenge.

With colorful and engaging graphics, the kid-friendly room is designed to encourage students to explore healthy habits including exercising, trying new fruits and vegetables, getting enough sleep, and limiting screen time.

Led by physical education

teacher and district Wellness Committee co-chair Heather Ratka, Hoover Elementary has a longstanding relationship with the Fitness for Kids program. This partnership has helped the school secure more than \$3,000 in grants through the Independent Health Foundation and has now culminated in the graphics to redesign the newly renovated Wellness Room into the Fit Lab theme.

Special thanks go out to all the Hoover Elementary staff and administrators involved in this project as well as the school's partners at the Independent Health Foundation. Students were so excited to see the new room up close and it was obvious what an impact this will have on their daily habits.



Students proudly display vegetables they grew in the Edison Elementary Children's Garden.

Children's Garden Thrives at Edison Elementary

The Edison Elementary School Children's Garden is thriving thanks to a dedicated group of students, staff, and families.

The expansive garden was established nearly 10 years ago to create an outdoor learning space where students could experience and appreciate nature. Tomatoes, eggplant, cucumbers, cantaloupe, peppers, basil, swiss chard, beets, and carrots are examples of what is grown there in addition to various plants and flowers. Produce from the garden is donated to a nearby neighborhood food pantry for local families.

The garden is maintained primarily by the Edison Elementary School Gardeners, an after-school club that meets once a week during the spring

and fall seasons. The club is open to third-grade students who help in the spring with planning, preparation, and planting and then usually these same students as fourth-graders in the fall who help with harvesting and preparing for winter.

The garden is also used in a variety of ways to enhance instruction for the lower grade levels. For example, kindergarten students recently raised and learned about worms which were released into the garden at the end of the unit. Second-graders raised butterflies and praying mantises. Others raised ladybugs. All the insects were released into the garden to help with pollinating the vegetables and flowers and safeguarding the garden against pests.



Hoover Elementary students celebrate the grand opening of the new Fit Lab with the help of the Independent Health Foundation.

Ken-East Cheerleaders Visit Lindbergh

Members of the Kenmore East Varsity Cheerleading Team recently helped a class at Lindbergh Elementary School observe "National Girls and Women in Sports Day," a day dedicated to recognizing and celebrating women's athletic achievements.

They visited the class of Katelyn Hemingway, a Lindbergh Elementary School teacher who also serves as head coach of the cheerleading team. Together, they learned about various female athletes who have achieved incredible feats in their respective sports. The Kenmore East cheerleaders helped each of Ms. Hemingway's students learn about their chosen athlete by researching them, creating a biographical report, and sharing details about the athlete to the rest of the class.

This was one of many examples of Kenmore East and Kenmore West athletic



A Kenmore East cheerleader works alongside a Lindbergh Elementary student.

teams visiting elementary schools to inspire the younger students and serve as role models for them while also helping them learn.



From left, Natalie Rivera, Arden Valenti, and Meryn Davis, the three Girl Scouts responsible for creating Boutique 97 at Holmes Elementary.

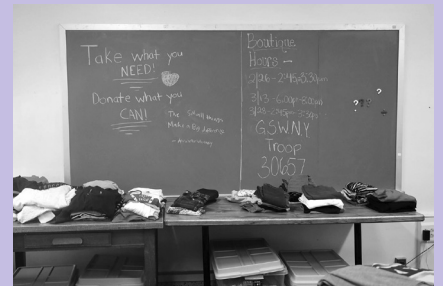
Local Girl Scouts Launch Free Clothing Boutique at Holmes

Earlier this year, a group of local Girl Scouts set out to make a difference for Holmes Elementary.

The Girl Scouts of Western New York Troop #30657, which is comprised of several students from the Ken-Ton community, opened a clothing cabinet at the school which they dubbed "Boutique 97." Students and families were then able to "shop" at the boutique for any items they might need at no cost.

Spearheading the project were eighth-graders Natalia Rivera from Kenmore East and Meryn Davis from Kenmore West as well as Ken-Ton area student Arden Valenti. The initiative represented a Silver Award project for the students which is necessary for earning the prestigious Girl Scouts Silver Award. Projects such as these are aimed at solving a problem and creating positive change for the community.

Free clothing shops have been established at a variety of schools including Kenmore East, Kenmore West, Kenmore Junior/Senior High, and Hoover Middle School to provide options for students.



A student in Kate Brown's class samples food from around the world.

cucumber salad, ramen noodles, kimchi, hummus, guacamole, pierogies, pomegranate, ham/cheese croissant sandwiches, sub sandwiches with refried beans, sausage roll-ups, and chocolate croissants.

Hoover Middle Student Helps Classmates Better Understand Vision Impairments



A Hoover Middle student uses a special pair of goggles to experience what it's like to have a vision impairment.

Students in Joanne Rice's class at Hoover Middle School recently teamed up with Alicia Koerber-Schwock, teacher of the blind and visually impaired, to give students insight into what it's like to live with a vision impairment.

Students wore special goggles that simulated what life would be like with different levels of visual challenges and also had the opportunity to learn about braille. This lesson was in preparation for a class reading of a biography on Louis Braille, who developed braille during the 19th Century.

One of Mrs. Rice's students, Madison McCombs, has a vision impairment and played a special role in the lesson, helping students write their own names in braille.

FES Class Samples Food from Around the World

Earlier this year, third-grade students in Kate Brown's class at Franklin Elementary School were learning about persuasive writing. Since it was also World Foods Month, Ms. Brown showed her class videos of what students in other countries are served for school lunch. Her class began asking questions about Ken-Ton's school lunch menu and then wrote about some of the food they'd like to see added.

Cook Manager Maria Marano, who oversees food service at the Franklin Complex, learned about the project and was excited to take part. With the help of Farm to School Coordinator Nicole Zugelder, Food Service Director Kim Roll, and cook Donna Foster, she then treated Ms. Brown's class to a "World Food Day" menu featuring some of the items they wrote about. This included sushi, salmon,

BUDGET INFORMATION

Item	Amount	Item	Amount
Budget	\$197,904,919	Tax Levy	\$97,802,911
Budget Increase	\$6,226,316	Tax Levy Increase	\$1,943,198
Budget-to-Budget % Increase	3.25%	Tax Levy % Increase	2.03%
Fund Balance & Reserve Use	\$7,113,105	Estimated Increase (\$100K Full Market Value House)	\$9.76/month

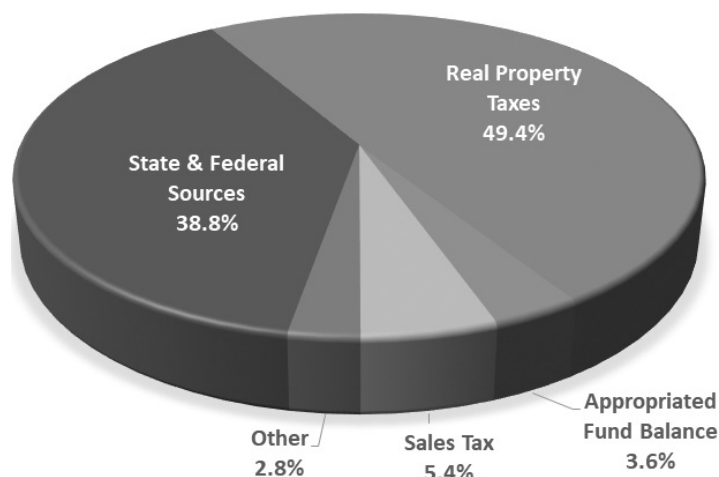
2025-26 REVENUE COMPARISON

	2024-25 Budget	2025-26 Budget	2025-26 Change
State & Federal Sources	\$72,086,985	\$76,695,103	\$4,608,118
Real Property Taxes	\$95,859,713	\$97,802,911	\$1,943,198
Appropriated Fund Balance	\$7,438,105	\$7,113,105	(\$325,000)
Sales Tax	\$10,700,000	\$10,700,000	\$0
Other	\$5,593,800	\$5,593,800	\$0
Total Revenue	\$191,678,603	\$197,904,919	\$6,226,316

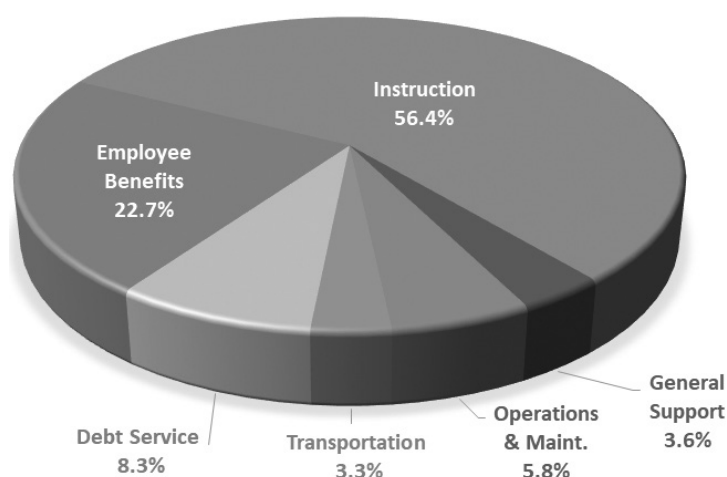
2025-26 EXPENDITURE COMPARISON

	2024-25 Budget	2025-26 Budget	2025-26 Change
General Support	\$6,926,075	\$7,162,631	\$236,556
Operations & Maint.	\$11,009,425	\$11,463,945	\$454,520
Instruction	\$109,374,687	\$111,610,672	\$2,235,985
Transportation	\$6,532,776	\$6,474,710	(\$58,066)
Employee Benefits	\$42,561,942	\$44,863,760	\$2,301,818
Debt Service	\$15,273,698	\$16,329,201	\$1,055,503
Total Expenditures	\$191,678,603	\$197,904,919	\$6,226,316

2025-26 REVENUE COMPARISON



2025-26 EXPENDITURE COMPARISON



VOTING INFORMATION

Voter Qualifications:

- Voters must be a U.S. citizen, 18 years of age or older, and a resident of the district for 30 days prior to the vote.
- Those who are not registered to vote will need to complete an affidavit confirming that they are a qualified voter.
- Photo identification and proof of citizenship, age, and residency are required for those who are not registered.

Early Mail/Absentee Ballot Information:

- Contact the District Clerk at (716) 874-8400 ext. 20342 for an early mail or absentee ballot application. Those on the permanent absentee ballot list do not need to apply for an absentee ballot. Applications must be received no later than seven days prior to May 20th, 2025. Early mail/absentee ballots must arrive no later than 5 p.m. the day of the vote on May 20, 2025.



BUDGET INFORMATION

Proposed Budget Preserves Opportunities for Students

Continued from Page 1

We began the budget development process in November understanding that we would be faced with a large budget gap. The entire Ken-Ton team worked hard to identify areas of savings in order to achieve a balanced budget proposal for adoption by the Board of Education. The district's strong financial position has helped us mitigate these challenges.

Prioritizing school safety and technology and preserving vast opportunities for students while maintaining key investments demonstrates our financial stability. We were able to achieve this by finding opportunities to reduce costs and identify savings wherever

possible while aggressively seeking out additional grant funding. Additionally, I am very happy to report to our community that we are making these strides in collaboration with all of our collective bargaining units. Everyone continues to focus on shifting resources where they will have the greatest impact possible, prioritizing meeting the needs of students. We expect this to be more important than ever in the years to come as various factors create even greater financial strain for school districts throughout the state.

In addition to the proposed 2025-26 budget, residents will vote on the annual bus purchase. This seeks to replace the district's fleet incrementally each year to ensure safety

and reliability for the buses that transport thousands of students to and from school each day. Additionally, we are beginning to transition to meeting NYS's electric bus mandate. Most funding for the bus purchase will come from NYS Transportation Aid as well as grant support. Residents will also vote on two three-year terms on the Board of Education.

You can find more information on the proposed 2025-26 budget and propositions in these pages and on our district website at www.ktufsd.org/budget. We encourage everyone to learn about the budget and vote on Tuesday, May 20th. As always, thank you for your continued support for the students of our district.

WHAT VOTERS WILL SEE ON THE BALLOT

Proposition 1: Proposed 2025-2026 Budget (funds all district-operated public schools/educational programs as well as services provided for all non-public/private schools located in the district as required by law).

PROPOSITION NO. 1: 2025-2026 BUDGET

RESOLVED, that the basic budget of \$197,904,919 for the Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda Union Free School District for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2025 and ending June 30, 2026 as presented by the Board of Education, is hereby approved and adopted and the required funds therefore are hereby appropriated and the necessary real property taxes required shall be raised by a tax on the taxable property in the District to be levied and collected as required by law.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Proposition 2: Annual bus replacement purchase to ensure safety/reliability for district buses (1 65-passenger bus, 1 65-passenger wheelchair bus, 2 42-passenger buses, 4 Microbird buses, and 2 electric buses).

ACQUISITION OF SCHOOL BUSES AND SIMILAR VEHICLES (AND RELATED EQUIPMENT)

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda Union Free School District, Erie County, New York (the "District"), is hereby authorized to purchase school buses and similar vehicles (and related equipment) for use in the transportation program of the District, at an estimated maximum cost of \$2,125,000, (with such estimated maximum cost reflecting the value of any trade-ins) and to expend therefor an aggregate sum not to exceed \$2,125,000; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the sum of \$2,125,000 (which may include certain up-front financing costs), plus an amount for interest thereon, shall be funded by the levy of a tax upon the taxable property of the District and collected in annual installments as provided by Section 416 of the Education Law; and be it further

RESOLVED, that in anticipation of such tax, bonds or other obligations (including, without limitation, obligations arising under leases, lease/purchase contracts or installment purchase contracts) of the District shall be issued or entered into in accordance with applicable provisions of New York State law; and be it further

RESOLVED, that New York State Transportation Aid funds expected to be received by the District as well as Federal, State, County and/or local funds including, but not limited to rebates are anticipated to offset a substantial part of such costs, and such funds, to the extent received, shall be applied to offset and reduce the amount of taxes herein authorized to be levied.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Board of Education Candidates: Vote for 2:

☐ Matthew Chimera ☐ Paul Spors

Budget/proposition information at www.ktufsd.org/budget & candidate information at www.ktufsd.org/candidates





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Sabatino Cimato,
Superintendent of Schools

*******ECRWSSDDM*******

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Cimato for the Ken-Ton
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www.ktufsd.org/connection



Budget Vote & Board of Education Election: 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday, May 20, 2025 at Hoover Middle School

Overall Budget Proposal

	Budget Adopted for the 2024-25 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2025-26 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2025-26 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$191,678,603	\$197,904,919	\$195,961,721
Increase/Decrease for the 2025-26 School Year		\$6,226,316	\$4,283,118
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		3.25%	2.23%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		2.95%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$95,859,713	\$97,802,911	
B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	\$0	\$0	
C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable **	\$0	\$0	
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy	\$0	\$0	
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D)	\$95,859,713	\$97,802,911	\$95,859,713
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$3,112,444	\$3,152,157	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$92,770,224	\$94,773,506	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$92,747,269	\$94,650,754	
I. Difference: G - H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval – See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$22,955	\$122,752	
Administrative Component	\$18,414,878	\$18,203,178	\$18,020,030
Program Component	\$144,207,243	\$148,891,606	\$147,646,677
Capital Component	\$29,056,482	\$30,810,135	\$30,295,014

***Provide a statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2025-26 school year, should the proposed budget be defeated pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law.**

The Board of Education will review the expenditure budget and make decisions on those items to be included based on Education Law Section 2023. The tax levy increase would have to be \$0 through cuts to programs and staff (including non-contingent items that would have to be removed in accordance with New York State Law) and additional use of fund balance and reserves.

**List Separate Propositions that are not included in the Total Budgeted Amount	Description	Amount
	Bus Purchase	\$2,125,000

	Under the Budget Proposed for the 2025-26 School Year
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings ¹	\$453

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2025-2026 by the qualified voters of the Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda Union Free School District, Erie County, New York, will be held at Herbert Hoover Middle School(s) in said district on Tuesday, May 20, 2025 between the hours of 7:00am and 9:00pm, prevailing time in the Herbert Hoover Middle School(s), at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

¹ The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.