The Indian Creek Local Board of Education is seeking a second chance for its bond issue to build two new schools and renovate Hills Elementary after taking action at a recent session.

School board members reset for 2018 during an initial organization meeting on Jan. 11, where re-elected board members Dan Bove and Dr. John Figel were sworn into office and Kim Mark and Bove were respectively named president and vice president. But another move was made in a subsequent regular session to advance the bond issue on the May 8 ballot by filing a resolution to proceed with the Jefferson County Auditor’s Office.

The end goal is to construct a new high school at the present campus with a new elementary school eyed for the district office location along Bantam Ridge Road in Wintersville. Meanwhile, upgrades would be made at Hills Elementary in Mingo Junction to bring it to like-new condition.

District Treasurer Denise Todoroff said the measure would be for 6.1 mills—a decrease from the previous 6.49-mill amount—which equates to homeowners paying $17.79 per month on a home valued at $100,000. Those eligible for the Homestead Act would pay about $13.34 on a monthly basis.

Todoroff planned to file with the Jefferson County Auditor over the next week to move the process forward. The board then approved a corresponding resolution to proceed and seek passage this spring. Should voters approve it, the state would co-fund 40 percent of the construction costs with the bond issue providing the remainder.

School Superintendent T.C. Chappelear said there was a slight difference in the millage amount, which was beneficial.

“The reason why the cost went down is the interest rates have fallen and district property valuations have gone up,” he explained. “We’re excited [about the bond issue]. The need is not only still here but it’s increasing as time goes on. We’re excited to engage in the process and get this passed.”

After district residents narrowly defeated a similar measure this fall by 167 votes, leaders conducted a community meeting to obtain input on the next move. The consensus was to try again and efforts began in December by filing several resolutions, including one to request state consent to issue bonds of the school district and submit the question to electors, another to certify the estimated life of the improvements at five years and the maximum maturity of the bonds at 37 years, and a resolution of necessity to construct the two buildings and upgrade Hills under the Exceptional Needs Program of the Ohio School Facilities Commission.

Officials have been pushing for passage, saying Indian Creek High School and Wintersville Elementary had outlived their usefulness and its heating and cooling equipment was too antiquated, making it difficult to find replacement parts for repairs. On that note, Assistant Superintendent John Belt alluded to a leak in the heating system at WES which was being closely monitored. Belt said the custodians were keeping a close watch and leaders hoped it would hold out until repairs could be made over the next holiday break.

Other concerns were also fueling the push for passage, such as safety issues with portable trailers being used as classrooms, a lack of handicapped accessibility at all three sites. SHP Leading Design of Columbus is working with the district as project manager and Dr. Chappelear said Indian Creek has a total of 13 months to obtain passage, including the remaining May primary and a special election in August. A campaign kickoff is being set for February and leaders are looking for more community members to get involved.

“It’s focusing on making sure our supporters get out there and vote,” he added. “We were excited by the amount of support we had the last time and we hope it’s still there. Our goal is to get 167 more votes. We know it’s the right thing to do and the time is right with the state’s involvement.”

Should voters approve the bond issue, the buildings could be ready during the fall of the 2021-22 school year. However, failure at the polls would result in the funds going elsewhere and the district likely would not be in line for a similar state contribution in the future.

Among other action, the board:

--Agreed to provide $10,000 to the ICHS Marching Band to help purchase some much-needed new uniforms. About $80,000 is needed to acquire the gear and officials said $17,000 has been raised thus far. Dr. Chappelear noted that the Indian Creek Foundation also provided a $5,000 contribution;
--Approved committees for the year, including Bob Smith and Dr. Figel, ICHS Athletic Board; Mark and Dr. Ted Starkey, labor relations; Dr. Starkey, legislative liaison; Bove, Curriculum Improvement Council; Dr. Starkey and Dr. Figel, insurance; and Smith, student achievement liaison;
--Approved a one-year probationary contract to employ Paula Arney as custodian at Hills for eight hours per day, five days a week, 260 days a year, and named Jeramy Winn as a classified substitute bus driver and custodian;
--Learned the new afterschool food program was up and running at Indian Creek High School. The district is participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) through the Ohio Department of Education and food is available weekdays from 3:15-4 p.m. It is open to kids under age 18 who reside in the district. On a similar note, leaders learned that the participation rate in the Breakfast in the Classroom program at WES and Hills was at 74 percent;
--Observed School Board Recognition Month as Dr. Chappelear presented board members with certificates and thanked them for their service;
--Set the next regular meeting for Feb. 22 at 6 p.m. at Indian Creek Middle School.
Student’s Anti-Bullying Campaign Linked to New Website

An anti-bullying campaign kicking off in February has some local ties with involvement from a Wintersville teen.

Carly Jo Laughery, a senior at Indian Creek High School and the daughter of Don and Robin Laughery, has ties to the Ilovehatehate.com, a website launching early next month by a company based in Beverly Hills, Calif. Laughery came up with a similar idea called “I Love Love, I Hate Hate—Kids Against Bullying” when she was a nine-year-old student at Hills Elementary School in Mingo Junction, and now the West Coast company has hopes to use the concept on a larger scale.

“I started it in the fourth grade as a way to bring awareness to the school,” Laughery said. “I saw on the news how kids were being bullied and we tried to prevent it from starting at our school. [My campaign] was a way to make kids feel more welcome. We wore shirts on certain days and the TV news did an interview.”

Her campaign continued through seventh grade and even gained some national notice when her mother gave a T-shirt to Hoda Kotb of NBC’s “Today” show. Kotb included it in her top favorite things of the month and Laughery said people from various states and schools were asking for the apparel. More recently, she was contacted by Ken Feuerman, who founded the website with partner John Trasacco and was producing a variety of fashion apparel and related goods featuring the name with a unique smile-frown logo. Her family granted his request to trademark the name while she will receive credit for the concept. The company also sent wristbands bearing the logo to show the idea in fruition and the bracelet were handed out at the high school and at Hills.

“It’s pretty exciting,” Laughery said. “My parents are pretty excited and we were really shocked when we found out someone from California wanted to do something with it. [Feuerman] wanted pictures of my fourth-grade classmates in T-shirts and wearing the bracelets so they can be on the website. I am excited to see where it goes.”

Feuerman was impressed with the teen’s achievement and hopes to reach a wider audience through the website.

“Our aim is to be commercially successful while at the same time encouraging people to post ideas and interact on the website to help make the world a better place,” Feuerman said. “We will also donate a portion of our profits to worthy causes and to help others launch their own campaigns like Carly did a few years ago.”

Feuerman explained that he and Trasacco had actually developed the idea independently, but upon doing further research they learned about Laughery initiating her successful anti-bullying campaign several years earlier. They were encouraged by her success and say they greatly admire her efforts.

“We hope that by wearing our apparel, people will be spreading positive messages and also visit the site to see what other people are trying to do to make things better and perhaps join in with them. Again, it is our intention to donate a portion of our profits to worthy causes and to help people launch their own campaigns.”

Feuerman added that Laughery had achieved a lot at her young age.

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Carly Jo Laughery, a senior at Indian Creek High School, began an anti-bullying campaign at Hills Elementary as a youth but now is seeing a similar plan on a greater scale. A California company has acquired the trademark name of her program and will launch the website ilovelovehatehate.com in February, which will sell merchandise such as T-shirts and wristbands bearing the campaign logo and promote ways to make the world a better place. ICHS students pictured with the bracelets include, from left, Hanna Williams, Laughery, Ian Belt, Alyssa Campbell, Emma Minto and Miranda Corrigan.

ICHS Senior Planning to Start Gardening Club Project in District

A new organization is coming to Indian Creek Local Schools that plans to cultivate a real interest in nutrition.

Indian Creek High School senior Natalie Wood, an ambassador of the Black Diamond Girl Scouts Council Post 4692, had approached the school board about permitting her to form a gardening club at one of the sites. Her final project would not only educate kids on nutrition and growing their own food, but it would also help her earn her a top award.

“I’m working on my gold award. It’s equal to the Eagle Scout award for the Boy Scouts,” she explained. “I was looking for problem in the community that could be fixed and be sustainable after I graduate. My goal is to start a gardening club to create planters on campus that has the most interest.”

Wood wanted to survey schools to learn which site would want to be involved with the project, adding that it would help students gain a better understanding on the importance of nutrition.

“The purpose of the club is to go in-depth into growing food and kids get experience making healthy choices,” she added, saying she would be involved in the club for the inaugural year but would need a volunteer advisor to help sustain the organization in the future.

Board member Kim Marks supported the idea and the school board approved the request. Wood hoped to have the project in place before the next school year.
Indian Creek Middle School is shining a spotlight on students who show strong character through a series of activities.

In January, the school began showcasing pupils who personified integrity and awarded them with highlights on its news program and free pizza. Assistant Principal Ryan Finney said it was all part of the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) and was a first for the program.

“We have a Character Spotlight and it’s a weekly recognition of one student per grade for outstanding character,” Finney said. “Domino’s Pizza is sponsoring it and each week teachers pick a student to be recognized. Our PBIS committee felt we needed to do something to recognize students that are doing everything right. We focus a lot of our time and energy on students that need help, but we don’t recognize those who know what they are doing. We want these students to be an example for others.”

The program began Jan. 23 and students were lauded on the morning news produced by the ICMS Media Club. Each month, a pupil is honored for a different character trait, including integrity in January and cooperation in February. Finney noted that the teachers met in grade-level teams to nominate a pupil who meets those attributes.

Meanwhile, the student-led Cool 2B Clean (C2BC) organization is assisting in some of those efforts while also lauding members who also qualified for PBIS rewards. As part of the second nine weeks’ reward on Jan. 26, McDonald’s provided 250 milkshakes to students in C2BC, which started during the last school year in conjunction with the restaurant franchise. Ron Galiano, regional owner/operator of McDonald’s in Steubenville, Wintersville, Weirton and the Pittsburgh area, joined with the school to implement the schoolwide program. Teachers selected 25 students in grades 5-8 for the founding board who are responsible for spreading positive messages on hallway signs, encouraging acts of kindness and providing incentives to keep students on the straight path. The board also select more students to participate, and since then the number has grown exponentially.

“Domino’s Pizza is sponsoring it and each week teachers pick a student to be recognized. Our PBIS committee felt we needed to do something to recognize students that are doing everything right. We focus a lot of our time and energy on students that need help, but we don’t recognize those who know what they are doing. We want these students to be an example for others.”

The seventh and eighth grade student council will hold Random Acts of Kindness Week on Feb. 12-16, at which time they will identify ways students can spread kindness at school, at home and in the community. Advisor Toni Voltz, a seventh grade teacher at the school, said the 20-member group will provide morning announcements on different topics and activities will be conducted to help others that will carry on well beyond that week.

“We are having a week-long clothing drive where we are asking for donations of boxers, underwear, socks, pants and shirts of all sizes from small to XXL for boys and girls to benefit any student in our school with a need,” she added. “We are organizing a Saturday each month, starting in February where a group of student council members and myself will volunteer at a local nursing home. We will also be doing something for our local fire departments and first responders.”

Voltz said student council members were educated on the meaning of Random Acts of Kindness Week by watching videos on how students and communities celebrated and how they’ve been impacted. They then selected the activities they would hold for the occasion.

“My goal was for students to be touched by this in a way that would cause them to want to make a difference in the lives of others. After this, the students and I discussed ideas they had about what it is they would like to do and we had a vote,” she commented. “I motivate, encourage and guide, but I allow this to be student centered and student run. It is important to me they develop necessary leadership, organizational, time management and problem-solving skills they will need both at school and in the community.”

She added that the nursing home visits were new, but the organization hopes to extend its acts of kindness to the community.

“This is why we are including first responders because they truly need all their kindness repaid in any way they can and they need to know they are important, valued and appreciated in our community and our school. I’d say the biggest difference this year is the extension of this into the community more so than in the past.”

Voltz has held similar programs while teaching fourth grade at Wintersville Elementary School and counts it as her favorite project of the year.

“In my personal opinion, it is also the most important event we do all year. Teaching academics is our top priority, but I feel that teaching good character, values and social awareness and skills is equally important in teaching the whole student.”

This is her first effort at ICMS and more events will be conducted this year, including a Muscular Dystrophy fundraiser in the spring. She noted that the youth learned a valuable lesson about being kind.

“It is wonderful to watch students’ reactions when they get to witness how something they have done has had a positive impact on or touched someone else. I want that feeling to be addictive so they continue to plant seeds of kindness throughout their lives, no matter how old they get,” she concluded. “I am very proud of my student council members. For being an average age of 12-14 years old, I am very moved by the dedication and leadership these students demonstrate. They are very passionate about the projects that we do to try and make a positive difference in our school and in our community. These are amazing young men and women and I could not be prouder of the blessed opportunity I have to work with these students.”
WES Students Collect 6,000 Box Tops for Education

More than 6,000 box tops were collected as part of a campaign at Wintersville Elementary School that will help bring more technology into the classroom.

The school wound down its month-long Box Tops for Education collection contest on Jan. 31 with students garnering 6,115 of the small rectangular pieces from brand-name products such as General Mills and Nature Valley. Sarah Hayes, a second-grade teacher and collection coordinator, said the event would help add computer devices to the school at no cost to the Indian Creek Local School District.

Amy Palma and Kristi Sciarra’s classes were respectively named winners in the primary and secondary categories and will get to pick their prize, and Hayes noted that the three secondary classes accounted for half of the overall total. She made the collection a true game by creating a likeness of a Monopoly board, known as WES-opoly, with chances for each class to earn play money and advance their game piece.

“Each of the primary and secondary grades had their own board, and for every box top collected they were awarded Monopoly money to their class. For every five box tops their piece was moved on the board, and every time they passed go they received 10 bonus points.”

She added that the children regularly checked the boards and grew more interested in the fundraiser. In addition to the general collection, parents and teachers could link to the school through a Box Top app and earn more pieces through product offers from such stores as Walmart and Sam’s Club. Hayes said the collection continues throughout the year but several contests are held to bolster involvement. This was her third year to coordinate the campaign and she said the project was overseen in the past by former teacher Crystal Hammack.

Each box top is worth 10 cents and can be exchanged for cash, and through the years the school has raised nearly $10,000 for WES and added items at no cost to the district. That funding has acquired new gym equipment and art supplies, while 24 Kindle Fire tablets were added last year and Hayes hopes to add even more technology with the latest sum.

“Those box tops are free money to us. Our last check was for over $800 and that was for a six-month collection,” she added. “I’d like to have at least five tablets in each classroom so the kids can use them in groups. It was a lot of work, but it is well worth it just to see the kids very excited about the contest…and the fact that we’re using these to incorporate more technology into the classroom so they can utilize them for reading and math resources.”

The school was also participating in the Labels for Education campaign, which will be discontinued after this year, and has earned 53,000 points in its account. Those points will be used to purchase more art and gym items.

Mitten, Book Tree Collection Helps Students, Community

Hills Elementary School shared the warmth this Christmas by conducting a pajama and book drive for kids in need.

Ashley Turnbull, student senate advisor, said her fourth-grade group coordinated the campaign which ran from Dec. 4-13. The organization sought new items in sizes of newborn through teen, and for each new pair of PJ’s a Scholastic book was contributed through the school.

“We always do a hat and mitten tree, and this year at Christmas we decided to change it up,” she said. “We want to help those in need and decided to go at it from a different angle. We received 77 pair of pajamas and the books were matched by donations from the school staff.”

Items were first distributed to needy students at Hills with the rest of the collection sent to the Friendship Room in Steubenville. Turnbull expects to hold another drive next year and it was a way for kids to learn how to give something back.

“I think it’s just nice to help others without getting things in return and the kids really had a great time collecting and seeing new PJ’s each day.”

Pictured at right: Hills Elementary Student Senate members conducted a pajama and book drive to benefit needy kids at school and in the community. About 77 pair of PJ’s were collected while books were matched by the school staff.