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SCENE



A look at activities in
The Liberty Central
School District



From gym floors to Pickleball courts

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

This past summer, Liberty Central School District completed a series of capital improvements to enhance school facilities and community resources, with a focus on student-centered upgrades and community integration.

New gym floor

In alignment with the district's rebranding efforts, the high school gym floor has been refinished and now features the newly updated school mascot. This upgrade is more than aesthetic; it underscores Liberty's commitment to fostering school pride and reinvigorating athletic spirit. Students and athletes alike have expressed excitement about the refreshed design, which is expected to elevate school events, physical education classes, and sports practices, according to Dr. Patrick Sullivan, Superintendent of the Liberty Central School District.

Performing arts space

One of the most anticipated summer improvements was the refinishing of the high school stage floor, a component of the district's Capital Outlay Project. Assistant Superintendent for Business, Laurene McKenna, noted that the stage and auditorium are essential spaces for both school and community use, regularly hosting musicals, performances, and local events. By upgrading this space,

the district supports student programming while enhancing a community venue that serves diverse cultural gatherings.

Tennis courts

Another exciting development is the complete resurfacing and relining of the high school tennis courts, which are now equipped to accommodate both tennis and the increasingly popular sport of pickleball. The courts, frequently used by students, alumni and community members, are among the campus's most visited facilities.

"These courts are packed every day, from spring to the first snowfall," said McKenna. "They're an essential recreational space for our town, so we were thrilled to make them better than ever."

Larger Capital Project underway

These summer upgrades complement a larger, multi-year capital project focused on both functional and transformative improvements across the district. Initial phases include constructing a new maintenance storage building, which will allow for the development of an Innovation Lab at the high school to support STEM and coding initiatives.

The project also includes a significant overhaul of the athletic field and track area, with plans to install a modern turf capable of supporting multiple sports, including football and soccer, while doubling as a winter practice area for spring sports teams.



Liberty Central School District has installed new gym floors to support the transition.



Completion of the capital project will bring a significant upgrade to the track and field facilities.

Dr. Sullivan explained that the new turf would provide a reliable venue for outdoor graduation ceremonies, ensuring the district can host events even in adverse weather. Plans also include up-

grading the track and various field sports areas to encourage even more community use, in line with the district's commitment to accessible and welcoming school facilities.

School Scene

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Climate-controlled learning

In response to a pending state regulation requiring temperature control in classrooms, the district has begun evaluating HVAC improvements to ensure comfort for students and faculty. With some

parts of the school reaching uncomfortable temperatures, particularly in warmer months, district officials are exploring long-term, energy-efficient solutions that could be gradually implemented as part of the ongoing capital improvement project.



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Welcoming new Athletic Director Kim Craft

STORY AND PHOTO
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

Liberty Central School District welcomed Kim Craft this year as the new Athletic Director, a role she describes as “my dream job.”

With years of teaching and coaching experience from Pine Bush, Craft is focused on enhancing opportunities for Liberty students in sports and wellness. Her approach reflects her deep commitment to education and the benefits of athletics for young people, both on and off the field.

Craft’s inspiration to pursue a career in education stems from her upbringing in a family of educators, including her mother, a recently retired second-grade teacher, and a broader network of family members involved in both education and sports.

“I feel like it was in my blood to be in education,” she shared. From the second grade, after being inspired by her physical education teacher, Mrs. Smith, she knew she wanted to be a P.E. teacher. She recalled, “Since then, I just remember I always wanted to be a P.E. teacher.”

This unwavering passion for sports and community health led Craft to accumulate multiple certifications, including a master’s degree in health, physical education and Recreation from Emporia State University and a Certification of Advanced Study in School Leadership from SUNY



Kim Craft

New Paltz. These qualifications, combined with her experience coaching basketball and softball, equip her to handle a wide range of responsibilities at Liberty, from overseeing physical education and health programs to coordinating district wellness initiatives.

A key part of Craft’s vision as athletic director is to increase student participation across all sports.

“My first goal is to just get more kids engaged in sports and athletics,” she explained. She said she believes students often overlook certain sports due to misconceptions, using track and field as an example: “People hear track and think, ‘Oh, I hate running,’ but there’s so much more to it. There

are throwing events, jumping events, something for everyone.” Her outreach efforts have already led to an uptick in enrollment, with the district seeing more than a 50-student increase in sports participation this fall alone.

Craft’s commitment to her students is evident in her hands-on approach. She makes a point to attend as many games as possible, building rapport with students and showing her support.

“It’s hands down my favorite part of the day,” she said. Her goal is to provide students with every opportunity to benefit from the life lessons sports can offer, from teamwork to time management.

“In sports, you realize you can’t

control everything. That’s an invaluable lesson.”

In addition to expanding sports participation, Craft is excited about the district’s capital project to install a new multi-sport field, which will allow Liberty’s teams to host games on turf, a feature many local schools already enjoy. This new facility will enhance the experience for both students and the community, fostering a strong school spirit and a sense of pride.

“I can’t wait for the day I hear kids saying, ‘We’re playing on turf today!’” she said.

Craft’s role, however, is not without its challenges. As a new administrator juggling various responsibilities, she admits that time management and prioritizing tasks can be difficult, but she has received immense support from her colleagues and mentors.

“Everyone here has been nothing but helpful,” she remarked. This spirit of collaboration is integral to her vision for Liberty’s sports programs and the broader school community.

Craft is determined to make Liberty’s sports programs a source of pride and empowerment for her students.

“I just want to be the voice for the kids and give them all the opportunities and experiences they can get through athletics,” she said. “Athletics have done so much for me, and I just want to pass that on to others.”



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Liberty's Inventionland Lab inspires young innovators

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

The Liberty Central School District has taken a bold step to foster creativity and problem-solving skills among its students through the introduction of the Inventionland Innovation Lab. Supported by a grant in partnership with Inventionland, the lab combines innovative design and STEM-based learning experiences, which will be integrated into the district's curriculum to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

"It's a creative, problem-solving environment where students collaborate with teachers on activities integrated into our curriculum," said Assistant Superintendent Marianne Serratore.

The lab's design is student-centered, featuring collaborative workspaces and equipment to support innovative projects.

According to Serratore, the goal is to provide students with engaging, hands-on learning experiences that make coming to school more attractive. "We want kids to be excited about school," she noted. "Solving authentic problems with their peers is an engaging way to get our students more active in their learning."

The development of the Inventionland Innovation Lab also includes professional development opportunities for teachers, enabling them to gain proficiency with new technology and teaching methodologies that encourage critical thinking.

"Two weeks ago, we completed training on using STEM for innovative lessons, with hands-on activities to help teachers envision what it will look like for students," Serratore shared, emphasizing the program's focus on "problem-solving, creativity, and real-life applications," noting how the lab encourages students to



Liberty's Mike Diehl, assisting students' professional development to prep for career opportunities after high school.

tackle tangible challenges — such as designing 3D-printed hooks for hanging drones.

Jill Parks, Liberty Middle School media specialist, added, "It's hands-on, project-based, and focused on skills students will need

for jobs that may not even exist yet." Parks noted that the lab encourages students to think creatively by working on product mashups where they combine objects, like planters and spray cans, to create entirely new items.

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“The fast pace of technological change means we have to prepare them for a workforce that’s constantly evolving,” Parks added.

The Inventionland Innovation Lab is part of a broader educational shift toward preparing students for future challenges by teaching them to be “problem solvers, innovators, and creative thinkers,” Serratore said.

Looking to the future, both teachers and administrators at Liberty Central School District see the lab as a powerful tool to cultivate the next generation of entrepreneurs and inventors, sparking a passion for lifelong learning and community improvement among students.



Liberty students collaborate on a new product design.



Jill Parks, Liberty Middle School media specialist, helps build careers in the lab.



Liberty students team up in the school’s new makers lab.

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Liberty Central Embraces WozEd

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

Back in 1978, Steve Wozniak didn't just build a computer; he changed the way the world interacted with technology. The Apple II, crafted by Wozniak's own hands, became one of the most influential personal computers ever made, pioneering today's tech landscape.

Now, over four decades later, Wozniak channels that same spirit of innovation into education with WozEd, a program designed to inspire and prepare the next generation of tech leaders.

The Liberty Central School District has embraced this forward-thinking initiative, integrating WozEd across multiple grade levels. The program aims to make STEM education accessible, engaging, and career-focused from an early age, introducing Liberty students to fields such as robotics, coding, and artificial intelligence.

Superintendent Dr. Patrick Sullivan said, "Ultimately, we want to give our students the ability and the knowledge they need to innovate for the future. As technology advances, we need to ensure our students have the foundation to grow and thrive."

A standout feature of WozEd is its hands-on approach to learning. From the youngest students in elementary schools to those at the middle school level, children are diving into robotics, coding and problem-solving projects.

Elementary School teacher Tamika Terry commented, "I love what it stands for. It's getting the youngest kids ready for STEM environments. They're jumping right into robots... even first graders are doing it."

According to Terry, students are excited about building robots, using tablets to follow instructions, and learning to work together. This hands-on focus creates a continuous learning pathway from elementary through middle school.

Assistant Superintendent Marianne Serratore explained, "It's a pathway. They learn the basics of robotics in elementary school, a little bit more in our innovation lab, and then the middle school technology teacher builds on that foundation with advanced robotics projects."

WozEd first entered Liberty schools through summer enrichment programs, giving students a taste of coding and animation. Following the success of these programs, the Liberty Central School District expanded WozEd's implementation.

"Dr. Sullivan looked into it back in 2019," Serratore added. "We started off slowly and purchased some WozEd kits for our summer program. They were very well received—the kids loved them."

From there, the district moved forward, integrating the program into elementary, middle, and eventually high school curricula.

The curriculum doesn't stop at just robotics. It covers a range of technological fields, including drones, engineering and design and artificial intelligence. As Serratore explained, "It's not only teaching about drones but also about aviation and aerodynamics. We recently purchased the virtual and augmented reality curriculum and look forward to implementing it into instruction."

For Liberty Central School District, WozEd is more than a set of lessons; it's a philosophy that prepares students not just to be workers but to be thinkers, innovators, and problem-solvers.

Dr. Sullivan noted, "As technology advances at an unprecedented pace, especially with innovations like quantum computing, it's crucial that our students have a solid foundation. We want them to have the skills to succeed beyond the walls of Liberty."

Liberty was recently recognized as a WozEd pathway district, earning praise for its dedication to preparing students for future success.

Liberty Middle School teacher Mike Diehl will accept an award on behalf of the district from Steve Wozniak at an upcoming conference. "It's a tremendous honor," said Serratore. "We're excited about the future."

Through WozEd, Liberty Central School District is helping to build a bridge between today's classrooms and tomorrow's careers by focusing on early education, practical skills and a love for problem-solving.



Elementary teacher Tamika Terry discusses upcoming projects with her class.



Elementary teacher Tamika Terry highlights how the program introduces STEM early.



Students working together to assemble WozEd STEM kits.

Liberty schools partner with Syracuse to boost college readiness

STORY AND PHOTO
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

The Liberty Central School District now offers its high school students a new opportunity to jump-start their college education through the Syracuse University Project Advance (SUPA). This program, known for its rigorous, university-level courses, allows students to earn college credits while still in high school, providing a smoother transition to post-secondary education.

Kevin Ferguson, a science teacher at Liberty, has been instrumental in the program's introduction. Teaching SUPA Biology, Ferguson commented, "I think it's been a success so far, but this is just the first year," he said. "At the end of the year, the students are going to walk away with eight college credits from Syracuse University."

SUPA courses differ from the traditional Advanced Placement (AP) program offered at Liberty. According to Ferguson, while AP credits depend on colleges' discretion and often require high exam scores, SUPA credits have a broader acceptance rate among universities.

"The acceptance rate for transferring credits from SUPA is significantly higher," Ferguson said. This flexibility provides Liberty students with a major advantage when applying to colleges nationwide.

Unlike AP Biology, which streamlines certain subjects, the SUPA Biology course offers a broader scope.

"Next semester is very different," Ferguson explained. "We're going to spend probably five or six weeks on a fetal pig dissection, covering anatomy, physiology and more. These are topics that AP Biology typically doesn't cover." This extended range provides students a more hands-on, in-depth learning experience, reflecting true college-level rigor.

The Liberty Central School District implemented SUPA as part of a broader initiative to expand academic opportunities for students. Assistant Superintendent Marianne Serratore said, "The curriculum is

Liberty science teacher, Kevin Ferguson



more challenging; it gives our students the chance to take the exact course they would at Syracuse University, at a significantly reduced cost," she said. "It adds rigor and enhances their college applications."

The program benefits students and enhances Liberty educators' professional development. Teachers participating in SUPA are trained as adjunct professors at Syracuse University, a role extending beyond regular high school teaching.

"Our teachers spent a week at the university for training," said Serratore. "It's a long process, but they know how much it will benefit the students."

For the district, the partnership with Syracuse University is not about promoting a particular pathway to the university but rather about enhancing academic flexibility and preparedness.

Ferguson further highlighted that while a similar course at Syracuse could cost around \$19,000, through SUPA, Liberty students can take it for under \$1,000, with financial assistance available for families in need. This affordability makes higher education more accessible and encourages students to pursue advanced coursework.

Looking ahead, both Ferguson and the district administrators hope to see the SUPA program expand. "Hopefully, we'll be able to expand the offerings here at Liberty," Ferguson said.

Plans are already underway to introduce SUPA Chemistry, with teacher Eugene Doyle set to take over the course next year following his training.

"These courses will prepare them for what college is going to look like," Serratore added, "It helps them to prepare for what's next."

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