

Commentary

A Newsletter for the Residents of the Westlake City School District

5.4-mill levy on November ballot \$1 million cut due to levy failure

At its July 30 meeting, the Westlake Board of Education approved placing a 5.4-mill operating levy on the Nov. 5 ballot. In May, a 5.9-mill levy failed by just 44 votes. After the narrow defeat the district opted to make about \$1 million in cuts and sought community feedback about how best to move forward.

The district already made tough decisions, cutting \$5 million over the past three years - or 10% of its budget. This year, cuts included eliminating 19 positions and further reducing transportation services.

The Westlake Schools have consistently been recognized as one of the top districts in Ohio

while also receiving a number of accolades for saving money through shared services, innovative practices, consortium purchasing and partnerships.

The district is taking measures to control costs. Last year a 5% pay reduction was instituted for all new administrators.

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Top U.S. colleges welcome Class of 2013

Members of the Westlake High School Class of 2013 have gained admittance to many of the most prestigious and selective universities in America. Among the educational institutions WHS graduates are attending this fall are American University, Case Western Reserve University, Denison University, Drexel University, Northeast Ohio Medical University, Northwestern University, Ohio University, Purdue University, Rice University, The

College of Wooster, The Ohio State University, the University of Notre Dame, University of Pennsylvania, Williams College and Yale University. Of the 310 graduates in the Class of 2013, 66 graduated Summa Cum Laude, 137 earned Honors Diplomas, 154 earned Presidential Awards of Excellence and 181 earned State Board of Education Awards of Merit.



Community Leaders' Sound Bite

The Westlake Schools have done an amazing job of graduating high quality students who contribute to our local community as well as a diverse global economy. Cuyahoga Community College is proud to partner with a district whose focus is on student success.



**- Dr. J. Michael Thomson,
Campus President, Cuyahoga
Community College Westshore
Campus**

I have had the privilege of partnering with the Westlake Schools through First Federal of Lakewood and The Rotary Club. *They show passion* – When First Federal hosted an Art Show, the students put their hearts on canvass for all to see; *They show vision* – On Career Day the students clearly and openly articulated their hopes and dreams for the world; *They show that they are team builders* – Through the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards Program; *They show character* – Many students can list numerous community volunteer activities while maintaining exceptional GPAs.



**- Marie Marrali, First Federal of Lakewood & The
Rotary Club of Westlake/Bay Village**

Our students are always excited to be assigned to the Westlake City School District because they know they will have a high quality experience with Westlake teachers. Having served on the Superintendent's Advisory Council, I know how much the district reaches out to the community to create mutually beneficial relationships



**- Karen Kaye, Ph.D, Chair, Division of Education,
Baldwin-Wallace University**

Nothing increases the value of your home like great local schools – not lower taxes, not shopping, not access to a highway – nothing, and Westlake has great schools! I've been a full-time realtor for nearly 20 years. If you take a home and put it on a gorgeous lot in four different cities it would sell for four different prices. Why? It's because of the school system.



- Mike DeAnna, realtor



Westlake World Partners is pleased to work with Westlake Schools as part of our mission to promote educational, cultural and civic exchanges with our Sister Cities. Using funds generated by our Annual Ohio Rose of Tralee Festival, we will be funding an educator exchange with Tralee, Ireland this Fall, which will lead to establishing ongoing programs. We are also working together to identify similar exchange programs with our other Sister City Kingsville, Ontario.

- City Council President Mike Killeen

The Westlake Schools are widely recognized for high academic performance and cultural accomplishments. We are now working on a high school internship House 107 that allows our students to explore their career aspirations with local business owners, building on the great programs the district has provided through partnerships for years.

- State Rep. Nan Baker



PTA's success in Westlake is due to two things: exceptional support of our very active parent volunteers and the outstanding relationship we have with the district's administration, teachers and staff, and their respect and unwavering support for all that we do. It is a privilege to work with Westlake Schools to make a difference in children's lives and our community.

**- Ann Beyer, President,
Westlake Council of PTAs**

It has truly been a pleasant experience working with the Westlake Schools through a foundation focused on the new football field turf project. Our goal from the beginning has been to find the best turf product available for the Westlake field and to make sure we were fiscally responsible spending the community-donated money.



**- Craig Catanzarite,
Westlake Athletic Development Foundation**



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s: Connections With Our Schools

The City of Westlake is very pleased with the relationship between the city and the Westlake Schools. This has been accomplished through good communication among staff and school leaders. Consequently, the citizens of Westlake have greatly benefited with many joint programs and projects throughout the community to enhance our quality of life, the desirability of our city, the quality of our service and the availability of so many more opportunities. It is indeed a pleasure to be part of this very successful partnership.



- **Westlake Mayor Dennis Clough**



Westlake Schools provide students with an exceptional, competitive learning environment. The person-centered learning helps students meet their full potential so they are college and career ready. What happens in the classroom today affects our leaders of tomorrow, and I can confidently say Westlake is adequately preparing the next generation of leaders in Ohio.

- **Sen. Tom Patton**



The schools are an excellent partner with the library in a wide variety of programs, such as Homework Help and Summer Brain Games. The Westlake School District is a huge part of what makes this community so great.

- **Andrew Mangels, Director, Porter Public Library**

Building healthier communities comes from creating stronger, more positive relationships with many civic groups and businesses. St. John Medical Center is proud of its partnership with Westlake High School and the arduous work accomplished with the Wellness Committee.

- **William A. Young Jr., St. John Medical Center President & CEO**



The Westlake community is one of the best communities because of our outstanding school system. The schools partner with Kiwanis through visits to nursing homes, helping with Special Olympics, raking leaves for the elderly and tutoring.

- **Russell Milan, Westlake Kiwanis**

WESTLAKE SCHOOLS COMMUNITY PARTNER

Westlake Schools partner with Kiwanis to provide youth service-leadership programs, including Key Club at WHS, Builder's Club at LBMS and Lion Club for young adults with disabilities. We also partner with the schools for Annual Yard Clean-Up for seniors, Salute to Silence, Westlake Relays, the Memorial Day Parade and Special Olympics. We are always impressed with the volunteer support by parents and staff for our service projects. Their presence is vital to what we do in the community of Westlake.

- **Sonnie Smith, President, Westlake Kiwanis**



The Westlake City School District worked with Cleveland Clinic's *Eat Right at School Program* to implement healthy changes to their elementary school menus. We are glad The Westlake City School District is now an *Eat Right at School* partner.

- **Laura Jeffers, MEd, RD, LD, Cleveland Clinic nutrition manager**



The principals and teachers with whom I have worked are extremely dedicated and proud of their students' accomplishments. The students are eager to learn and our Club appreciates their interest and participation in gardening and the environment.

- **Regina McCarthy, Westlake Garden Club**

Feedback indicated cuts, new levy

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Earlier this year teachers agreed to a 0% pay scale increase and a 2.5% decrease in the second year of the new contract, saving more than \$5 million. Recently, classified staff agreed to a two-year wage freeze. All employees' insurance contributions rose by 50% for the first time.

After community input, the November levy request was reduced to 5.4 mills and would be the first operating levy in 7 years. The levy will allow current programming to remain.

If the levy fails in November, the schools will recommend another \$2.2 million in cuts, which may include:

- Eliminating 30-plus teaching positions and

- 7-10 non-teaching positions
- Imposing additional transportation cuts
- Eliminating access to school buildings after hours
- Either significantly increasing tuition for all-day kindergarten or eliminating the option
- Reducing athletics, music and arts offerings or imposing significant pay-to-participate costs
- Cutting AP offerings
- Delaying or eliminating International Baccalaureate programs

The school district understands the importance of providing the excellence in our schools our community expects while being fiscally responsible. Even with this levy, Westlake will remain in the bottom 25% of school taxes in Cuyahoga County and will ensure great schools for a great community.



The Westlake City School District is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action agency and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, political affiliation or disability.

Westlake City Schools

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The Westlake City School District is a member of the Westlake Chamber of Commerce.

Please forward comments to Kim Bonvissuto, communications coordinator, 27200 Hilliard Blvd., or call (440) 250-1258. Or email bonvissuto@wlake.org

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