

The Valley INSIDER

Cassadaga Valley Central School District Newsletter

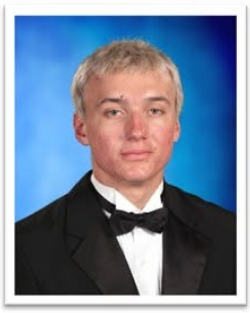
On Friday, June 26 2026, Cassadaga Valley held their 86th commencement ceremony. There were 48 members of this year's graduating class and both Ryan Nobles and Derek House were the evening's guest speakers.



The class of 2026's Valedictorian is Grant Zahm. Grant has distinguished himself through exceptional academic achievement, leadership, and service. Grant earned a highly competitive appointment to the United States Air Force Academy, a process requiring both a congressional nomination and demonstrated excellence in academics, leadership, service, and athletics. His accomplishments include receiving the Excellence in Chemistry Award from the United States Chemists' Association, serving as a Boys' State Delegate, and participating in Civil Air Patrol. He was also named the 2025 CVCS Athlete of the Year, earned multiple football honors including the Coaches Award and Joe Annarella Award, and received 1st Team All-Section Defense recognition. Grant has led as Key Club President and has been actively involved in Jazz Ensemble, Valley Minstrels, High School Band & Chorus, as well as varsity football and basketball. He plans to major in Aeronautical Engineering with a minor in physics and pursue a career as a fighter pilot.



The class of 2026's Salutatorian is Denza Fanara. Denza has excelled across academics, the arts, athletics, and community involvement. She was a member of the National Honor Society and Tri-M Honor Society, and has earned recognition through NYSSMA, All-County Percussion, and for having her ceramics work selected for display at the Regina A. Quick Center for the Arts at St. Bonaventure University. Denza also showcased her talents on stage in a lead role as Mrs. Darbus in High School Musical. Athletically, she has been a captain of the varsity softball team and participated in varsity volleyball and basketball, as well as the Amherst Lightning travel softball team. In the arts, she serves as Band President and percussionist and participates in Jazz Band, Valley Minstrels, and High School Chorus. Her community involvement includes the Youth Equestrian Development Association, Interscholastic Equestrian Association, and 4-H. Denza plans to attend St. John Fisher University for Legal Studies and hopes to continue on to a top-tier law school and career in law.



Grant Zahm



Denza Fanara



Congrats, Class of 2026!

Guest speaker, Ryan Nobles, NBC News' Chief Capitol Hill Correspondent, has built an extraordinary career at the highest levels of broadcast journalism. Reporting daily from Washington, D.C., he appears across NBC Nightly News, TODAY, NBC News NOW, and Meet the Press NOW, covering the nation's most significant political events and breaking news. Before joining NBC News, Ryan spent eight years as a Congressional Correspondent for CNN, where he led coverage of the January 6 Select Committee, presidential campaigns, and historic events shaping our nation. Throughout his distinguished career, Ryan has traveled internationally with Congressional delegations, interviewed world leaders—including three sit-down interviews with President Barack Obama—and earned Emmy nominations, two regional Emmy Awards, and an Edward R. Murrow Award for excellence in journalism. From Western New York to the halls of Congress, Ryan's journey is a remarkable testament to where hard work, curiosity, and determination can lead. Joining him was fellow Cougar alumnus Derek Houser, Salutatorian of the Class of 2001. Derek has dedicated his career to education as a Social Studies teacher at a neighboring district, where he has inspired students for nearly two decades. In addition to his work in the classroom, he has served as a class advisor and has coached the varsity girls' soccer team since 2009, leading the program to sectional championships in both 2020 and 2023. His unwavering commitment to education, leadership, and student success embodies the very best of the teaching profession.







Marching Toward the Future Together

The last day of school for seniors was a heartwarming celebration of friendship, school spirit, and new beginnings as our seniors and kindergartners came together for a special day of connection. The students exchanged thoughtful gifts and shared words of encouragement and well wishes, creating meaningful memories across generations.

Following the gift exchange, our newest graduates joined together for a memorable clap out through the elementary school. Led by the MHS Marching Band, the halls were filled with music, applause, and smiling faces as students, teachers, and staff lined the hallways to celebrate the Class of 2026 and wish them success in the exciting journey ahead.

This special tradition served as a beautiful reminder of the strong sense of community within our district. As our seniors prepare to begin their next chapter, they leave behind an inspiring example for our youngest learners, who one day will walk those same halls toward graduation. We are proud of our seniors and grateful for the opportunity to celebrate this meaningful milestone together.





Happy New School Year!

Our Board of Education held its annual Reorganization Meeting, on July 1, officially kicking off a new school year. During the meeting, our Board members took their Oath of Office, and our Board President, Aaron Richner, and Vice President, Diane Ellsworth, were sworn into their leadership roles.

We are grateful for the dedication and commitment of our Board of Education as they continue to serve our students, staff, families, and community. We look forward to working together to make this school year a successful one for everyone.
Here's to a great year ahead!









These Cougars Can ROAR!

At the June 10 Board of Education meeting we celebrated our second-semester ROAR recipients, recognizing staff members who exemplify our district's values through their daily actions and unwavering commitment to excellence. Congrats to the following staff and students!

- Danielle Johnson
- Corinne Kelly (could not attend)
- Sandi Askin
- Karen Reynolds (could not attend)
- Reggie Cole (could not attend)
- Marie Torrey
- Kristin Parker
- The PreK Crew! Jessica Emmott, Bethany Peterson, Christine Krenzer
- Lena Lisciandro
- Jackson Crowell
- Matthew Lawrie
- Tyler Anderson
- Logan Farnham
- Emma Daigle
- Austin Gloss
- Catie Russell
- Mia Fanara (could not attend)















Congrats, Retirees and Newly Tenured Educators!

Congrats to our recent retirees! You'll be greatly missed in the Valley!

- Mr. Cusimano
- Ms. Logan





Congrats to all of our recently tenured educators!

- Heather Heald (not pictured)
- Mark Sager (not pictured)
- Maddie Sohl
- Jacob Wilcox
- Bryelle Wallin
- Kelly Sedlak
- Emily Fox
- Morgan Gumhalter
- Kayla Orbaker
- Aliah Sample-Barisan
- Marie Torrey



The Return of Spring Thing!

Cassadaga Valley's Spring Thing made a wonderful return this year, bringing together students, families, staff, and community members for a full weekend of fun, entertainment, and school spirit. The excitement began on Friday evening, May 8, with Spotlight on the Valley, a community talent show that showcased the incredible talents of Cassadaga Valley students, staff, and community members. Audience members enjoyed a variety of performances while the PTO offered concessions, a basket raffle, and a photo booth. It was a wonderful way to kick off a weekend filled with fun, entertainment, and community spirit. Saturday's festivities kicked off with our 4th Annual Color Run, where participants braved the chilly temperatures with smiles on their faces. Runners of all ages enjoyed a colorful course filled with rainbow powder, bubbles, and plenty of laughter. It was a fantastic way to start the day and create lasting memories. Throughout the day, visitors also enjoyed a wide variety of activities and attractions. The kickball tournament was a crowd favorite, providing plenty of laughs and friendly competition.

There was something for everyone to enjoy, including delicious food and treats from Best of Buffalo, Three Lakes Cafe, Pit and Pops, Franklin's Kettle Corn, and Cups and Cones Ice Cream. Guests also visited the FFA petting zoo, explored demonstrations from the Cassadaga Fire Department and local police, and participated in many family-friendly activities.

As the day continued, the celebration moved to the Cassadaga Valley Middle/High School, where guests enjoyed live performances by 2026 graduate, Cameron Katilus, and the Ion Sky Band. The evening also featured a basket raffle, additional vendors, and a family movie, making for a perfect ending to an exciting day.

Spring Thing would not have been possible without the incredible support of our student workers, volunteers, vendors, performers, sponsors, staff, and everyone who attended. Thank you to all who helped make the return of this beloved tradition such a tremendous success. We are grateful for the enthusiasm and support shown by our school community, and we are already looking forward to an even bigger and better Spring Thing next year!









Together we CAN!

Cedar Point Festival of Music Band Trip

Cassadaga Valley's HS Concert Band completed a successful trip to Ohio in mid-May. The band made their 4th appearance at the Cedar Point Festival of Music, where they were awarded with the rating of "Superior" for the 2nd time in their competition history. They also visited the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland. Band director, Nicole Zenns, is very proud of the musicianship and maturity displayed by the group throughout this experience. Great teamwork, everyone! #ValleyProud







Ctrl + Alt + Achieve: High Schoolers Get Tech+ Certified



Emma Nickerson and Blake Sam earned their CompTIA Tech+ certification in Mr Cole's Computer Hardware class. This industry-recognized certification is a stepping stone to future IT certifications from CompTIA. To earn this certification students must demonstrate competency in computer hardware, applications, programming and databases.
Congrats, Emma and Blake!

CompTIA Tech+ CERTIFIED

STEM Wars!

In late May, in the CO2 Cars High School Division, Tanner Olmstead brought home 1st place, and in the Middle School Division, Kyhlan Eggleston earned 3rd place!

Overall, 16 students from our Tech and Ag Department attended and represented our school well. We're proud of all their hard work and accomplishments!





Memorial Day

The Middle/High School combined Parade Band appeared at the Gerry Memorial Day parade and service on Sunday, May 24. They also played at the Sinclairville Parade and the Cassadaga Parade and both services on Memorial Day. Students had fun playing music while serving their community that weekend.





Ancient Rome in Action

Mr. Quattrone's classes learned about how the Roman army helped fuel Rome's massive expansion across the Mediterranean world. This spring, they stepped into the sandals of the Roman legionnaires.

A major focus of the lesson was on the famous "testudo" formation — Latin for "turtle" — where Roman soldiers locked shields together to create a nearly impenetrable defensive wall. This disciplined strategy gave the Roman army a major advantage during their military campaigns and showcased the importance of teamwork, communication, and trust.



To bring history to life, students formed their own testudo formations while classmates attempted to break through the formation using dodgeballs. The activity gave students a hands-on understanding of the coordination, discipline, and skill that made Roman legionnaires one of the most effective fighting forces in ancient history.

Learning history is always more memorable when students get the chance to experience it firsthand!



SES Field Day!



Field Day is always such a fun event at SES! Thank you to our volunteers and the CVPTO for sponsoring this event!
In June, our students had an amazing day filled with exciting activities, including bounce houses, a giant slide, an obstacle course, Gaga Ball, airbrush tattoos, a photo booth, and delicious popcorn generously provided by the Vahl family's popcorn truck. Students also enjoyed breakfast and lunch in their classrooms, helping the day run smoothly while maximizing time for fun. Seeing our students laughing, playing, and making memories together is what Field Day is all about!









On Friday, May 15th, 1st grade students took a field trip to the Sinclairville Post Office! Students have been learning about letter writing and about parts of their community. As part of the trip, students were able to stamp their letter, thanks to the kindness of the post master, and put it in the mail slot for delivery!



SES Science Fair

SES held its Science Fair in mid-May. The event, led by Mr. Guziec and Mrs. Hale, showcased many creative and engaging student projects! Families and staff had the opportunity to explore experiments, demonstrations, and presentations that highlighted students' hard work, curiosity, and problem-solving skills. Thank you to everyone who participated and helped make the evening a success!



Leading the Way at SES

In mid-June, Vinny Miller had the opportunity to serve as Student Assistant Principal for the Day alongside Mr. Fredrick at Sinclairville Elementary School! Vinny did an outstanding job helping with school responsibilities, visiting classrooms, interacting with students and staff, and learning about the important work that goes into leading a school. Thank you, Vinny, for your enthusiasm, leadership, and positive attitude throughout the day. Great job representing SES!





CVCS Returns to Special Olympics!



After a hiatus, CVCS was thrilled to return to Special Olympics competition this year! On June 2, our athletes traveled to Strider Field in Jamestown for a day filled with determination, sportsmanship, and achievement.

Competing in running, throwing, and jumping events, our athletes gave their best effort and represented CVCS with pride. The beautiful sunshine and enthusiastic atmosphere made it a memorable day for everyone involved.

We are so proud of our athletes for their hard work, perseverance, and positive spirit. Congratulations to all who participated! #ValleyProud



Special Olympics







Confidence in Every Step

What an amazing way to wrap up the season! In June, our incredible group of 15 girls crossed the finish line at the Girls on the Run 5K in Buffalo!



In the previous eight weeks, these 3rd–5th graders met twice a week for fun, interactive, screen-free lessons led by our dedicated coaches. Through games, movement, and meaningful conversations, they learned valuable life skills like building confidence, managing stress, and navigating friendships—all while supporting one another every step of the way.

The season culminated in a celebratory, non-competitive 5K where every girl could walk, run, or even dance her way to the finish line. The smiles, determination, and sense of accomplishment were truly inspiring!

We are so proud of these girls for their hard work, growth and courage. Congratulations on a fantastic season!

Student Leadership in Action!

During the Key Club's April 2nd meeting, members of the Northern Chautauqua Community Foundation visited students to teach the importance of philanthropy, community service, and giving back. Students then took the lead by brainstorming a "laundry list" of needs within the local community and working together in groups to discuss organizations and causes making a difference.

At the start of the meeting, NCCF representatives shared that they planned to donate $1,000 to an organization chosen by the students by the end of the session. Through thoughtful discussion and a completely STUDENT-LED decision-making process, the club determined that multiple organizations deserved support for the impact they have on the community. Inspired by the students' passion and leadership, NCCF doubled their original donation commitment!

As a result, $500 grants were awarded to both the school's Key Club and S.A.D.D. (Students Against Destructive Decisions) chapters, while Park Methodist Church received a $1,000 donation.

This student-led initiative highlights the incredible compassion, leadership, and commitment our students have toward improving their community. We are so proud of the positive impact they continue to make!









Congratulations to Jocelyn Wintersteen on an incredible performance at the Girls Golf Section VI Championship in late May! Jocelyn captured 1st place with an outstanding round of 76, earning her a spot at her FOURTH state championship appearance! Jocelyn Wintersteen then represented The Valley at the NYS Girls Golf State Championship, finishing in 32nd place with rounds of 80 and 82. In addition to her strong play on the course, Jocelyn was honored with the Section VI Sportsmanship Award, a recognition that reflects her character, integrity, and positive attitude throughout the championship.

We are incredibly proud of Jocelyn for her accomplishments and for representing Cassadaga Valley with excellence both on and off the course. Congrats on a fantastic season and this well-deserved honor!

Superintendent Message: School's Out For The Summer

Dear Cassadaga Valley Community,

The final buses have rolled away, classrooms have quieted, and another extraordinary year has become part of The Valley's story. Summer has a way of reminding us that growth doesn't only happen inside school walls. It happens on ball fields and front porches, at summer jobs and camps, while serving neighbors, exploring new places, and simply spending time with family. It is a season to recharge, reflect, and prepare for the next adventure. As I look back on this school year, one thought continues to rise to the top: Our students are proving every day that they are Life-Ready, and the creative folks who keep coming up with amazing ideas to help that happen are ready for a well-deserved recharge!

Leadership That Inspires

Our Class of 2026 has left an incredible mark on Cassadaga Valley. They have led with kindness, spoken with courage, persevered through challenges, and demonstrated what it means to use their voices to make our school stronger. Their leadership reminds us that Life-Readiness is about much more than grades or diplomas. It is about character, resilience, service, and the confidence to step into the future prepared for whatever comes next. That spirit is embodied by Valedictorian Grant Zahm, who will continue his journey at the United States Air Force Academy. His commitment to excellence, discipline, and service reflects the very best of The Valley. We also proudly recognize Danny Callentine, who has chosen to serve our country through the Army National Guard, and Aaron Steen, who will join the United States Navy. To these young leaders: thank you for choosing service above self. Your willingness to dedicate yourselves to something greater inspires our entire community, and we are grateful for the example you set.



Learning That Opens Doors

Life-Readiness is also about developing skills that create opportunity. Congratulations to Emma Nickerson and Sam Blake, who earned their CompTIA Tech Certification, an industry-recognized credential that demonstrates technical expertise and prepares them for careers in one of today's fastest-growing fields. Their accomplishment shows that our students are leaving Cassadaga Valley with knowledge that translates directly into the real world.





A Principal for a Day

Sometimes leadership comes with a new office and a very important title. Congratulations to Vinny Miller, who earned the opportunity to serve as Assistant Principal for a Day at Sinclairville Elementary School. Vinny embraced every responsibility with enthusiasm, curiosity, and a smile, proving that great leaders listen, learn, and enjoy serving others.





Moving Up and Moving Forward

In June we also celebrated our amazing 5th graders (Class of 2032) as they take the exciting step from Sinclairville Elementary to the Middle-High School. While the building may be bigger, the message stays the same: you belong here, you are capable of extraordinary things, and The Valley will continue cheering you on every step of the way. We cannot wait to watch you grow into the leaders, innovators, artists, athletes, and problem-solvers of tomorrow. Watching your indisputable charm, confidence and class camaraderie at your moving up ceremony tells me that you are more than ready to step into your middle/high school shoes!

Together we CAN!





Superintendent Message, Continued

More People Behind the Magic

One of the greatest privileges of serving as Superintendent is getting to witness the extraordinary work that happens all around. As another remarkable year comes to a close, there are so many people deserving of a standing ovation. Joni Hale and the Sinclairville Elementary PTO once again delivered an unforgettable Field Day. What our students experience as a day of fun is actually the result of countless volunteer hours, planning meetings, and an unwavering commitment to creating joyful childhood memories. Thank you for reminding us that the best school traditions are built by an amazing community.

In our food service department, Trisha Myers and Cat Easton have done exceptional work cleaning, organizing, completing inventory, and preparing kitchens and storage rooms for the summer months. Stacey Meyers and Jeanette Ray deserve special recognition for adapting to ever-changing meal service schedules and accommodating what seemed like an endless stream of field trip lunch requests during these final weeks of school. They have met every challenge with grace, teamwork, and a smile.

I also have to recognize Kelly Sedlak. I'm honestly not sure how she is making all of this magic happen, but she is absolutely knocking it out of the park. Her first year in this newly expanded Executive Principal role has included an incredible number of moving pieces, celebrations, ceremonies, concerts, awards, testing schedules, graduations, and end-of-year events. Through it all, she has brought a level of organization, polish, preparation, and calm leadership that has elevated every experience for our students, staff, and families. We are incredibly fortunate to have her leading alongside us.

And finally, I have to celebrate the incredible women who keep The Valley running every single day. Amber, Ashley, Nikki, Vicki, Peg, Jodi, Melissa, Rachel and Jen (and sometimes JoAnn) are the friendly voices answering phones, the experts directing traffic, the calendar keepers, substitute wranglers, guest coordinators, parent problem-solvers, and information managers who somehow make the impossible look routine. Especially during these last few weeks, when every minute matters and every schedule changes three times, they have been the true MVPs.

There is an old saying that success is built on a thousand small acts of excellence. At Cassadaga Valley, I have the privilege of watching those acts happen every single day. To all of these remarkable people, and to the many others who quietly make The Valley such a special place, thank you for making excellence look effortless and for proving that extraordinary schools are built by extraordinary people.

Until We Meet Again...

As another school year comes to a close, I am filled with gratitude for our students who dream big, our staff who believe in those dreams, our families who support them every step of the way, and our community that continually invests in the future of The Valley. Take time this summer to rest, explore, read a great book, spend time with the people you love, and create memories that will last a lifetime. We'll be here, planning, preparing, and eagerly waiting to welcome everyone back for another year of opportunity, growth, and extraordinary student success. Have a safe, joyful, and well-deserved summer.

With Cougar Pride and Unstoppable Purpose,

Tammy Mangus

Tammy Mangus

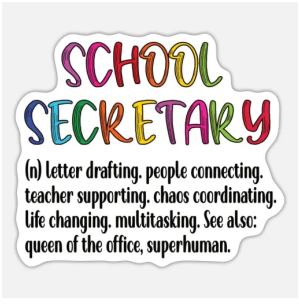












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REMINDER that Cassadaga Valley is now working in partnership with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library!

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library delivers books to children within the school district every month from birth to age 5 for FREE! Scan the QR Code below to join this program for your children!



