STUDENT LEADER

Virginia Student Councils Association ■ April/May 2019

What's Inside

Orange County High Gives Back..... 2

Freshman Focus, Freshman Fusion, Spring Tours and Tie Dye Surprise..... 3

Virginia Schools Named as NatStuCo Gold Councils of Excellence..... 4

Sidewalk Chalk Art Greetings 4

Jason King Named as Adviser of the Year..... 4

What's Ahead

June 1: Postmark deadline for Advisory Council applications

June 24-26: NatStuCo Conference at South Fayette High School, McDonald, PA

Councils Work to Help New Students Transition to Their Next Grade Level

Do you remember what it felt like to be a freshman or a new middle school student? Do you remember the feeling of being thrust from your safe, familiar school into a new and intimidating environment?

The anxiety of getting lost and asking a menacing teacher for help and slinking into class after the shrill tone of the late bell is still fresh in the minds of many walking through the halls of C.D. Hylton High School. To ease the transition from middle school to high school as much as possible, Hylton's Student Council Association (SCA) participates in freshman orientation, an event essential to making incoming freshmen feel welcome at our school.

SGA Officers at South Lakes High School take a selfie with the new students at a pep rally during orientation in August before school starts.

Although most schools have a similar event to familiarize new students to the bell schedule and other workings of the school, Hylton makes an effort to help accustom freshmen to the treacherous journey that is high school on a personal level. Student ambassadors from SCA and National Honor Society help incoming freshmen navigate the halls while they go through a mock school day. The effect of freshmen being guided by their peers is that they feel more at ease knowing that there are students they can turn to for help anytime throughout the school year.

While acting as tour guides, the student ambassadors also have a unique opportunity to give advice and answer any questions the freshmen have, serving as a mentor of sorts. Other than the first day of school, freshman orientation is probably the most importantday for the new members of the Hylton family. SCA members are always excited to participate in this event and help the freshmen feel welcome

continued on page 3

Advisory Council Applications Available Online

The VSCA Advisory Council meets throughout the school year to help plan the annual convention and to offer ideas and support to the officer schools through work on a variety of committees. Students who make up the advisory council are appointed to their positions based on a written application.

Advisory Council members will have three scheduled meetings for 2019–2020. Members are expected to attend a minimum of two of the three meetings, and must pay their own expenses to participate. Members also are expected to write at least one article for the *Student Leader* newsletter.

Interested students can find a fillable application available online at *http://bit.ly/AdvComm2019*. A signature sheet must also be submitted and it is available at *http://scaleader.org/convention-2019*. Applications are due to the VSCA State Office by June 1.

Orange County High Gives Back to the Community

By Jace Clemmer

The Student Council Association at Orange County High School strives to serve the community throughout the year. OCHS provides community service independently and by partnering with local businesses, charities, and even other school organizations. Among the favorite partners of Orange High's SCA are the local elementary schools. By volunteering at the elementary school yearly events and organizing special programs for them, the SCA models leadership to its future members.

At Unionville Elementary School, in Orange County, Fitness Night is an annual event. Students return to school on a Friday evening for dinner, followed by fun fitness-based activities. These include stations such as ping pong, sack races, cup stacking and basketball. Prizes and special fitness-related toys are given out as well. The SCA members of OCHS volunteer to run stations, pass out dinner, and interact with the young students who are in kindergarten through second grade.

Unionville's sister school, Lightfoot Elementary, is located just one mile down Route 522 in Orange County. Their annual STEAM Night is anxiously anticipated by the students enrolled there in grades three through five. The night holds special value to the fifth graders, as their science fair projects are on display for family and friends. Activities and rotations are based on the areas of science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics. SCA members happily hand out dinner, which is usually hot dogs and chips. They run hands-on stations and even teach the younger generation about robotics.

Orange Elementary School is located in the town of Orange and is in closest proximity to Orange County High School. SCA members look forward to OES's Spring Festival, which takes place towards the end of the school year. Inflatables, food trucks, carnival games, and music fill the park that surrounds the elementary school. This kindergarten through fifth grade school attracts a large crowd of students, family members, and teachers to their annual event. The SCA volunteers are vital to helping this night run smoothly.

While community service is rewarding, no matter where it occurs, most Orange County High School Council members agree that helping with the young children is great fun! It's especially rewarding to return to where many members attended elementary school and lend a hand. The younger children get to see how much fun it is to give back and the high school students have the privilege of modeling service and leadership. It is these relationships that make a community strong.

Share Your Successful Ideas

Does your council sponsor a project that is really successful or unusual? Do you conduct a great fundraiser? Have you found a terrific solution to a perennial problem? Are you effective at using social media to get the word out?

Write up a short description of something your council does well and send it with photographs to *Avail@scaleader.org* and you could find yourself featured in an upcoming issue of *Student Leader!*

Councils Help Students Transition (cont'd from p. 1)

as they begin their high school experience.

Freshman Focus

Because it can be quite challenging to make friends and find a new place where you feel accepted, the Student Council at Oscar F. Smith High School holds a Freshman Focus every year in August, which gives new students a way of making new friends and getting to know their latest learning environment before the school year actually begins.

Before the Freshman Focus takes place, each freshman is paired with an upperclassman to mentor them and help them become more accustomed to how things work at Oscar F. Smith. Mentors take their mentee to their classes on the first day and answer any questions that they have.

"It has been our goal through this program to create a more welcoming environment and productive school year for these new students," says council member Kaity Wasinger. "Students who sign up and participate in this program often feel more comfortable and become more involved within the school during their time here. We encourage mentors to stay in contact with their mentees throughout the school year to make sure that they are finding their way and getting involved."

Freshman Focus is held in late August every summer, where students are first put into groups to learn more about each other through exciting ice breakers and games. These are meant to help them open up about themselves and become more comfortable with their future classmates. Then they take a tour of the school with their groups and are given lessons on different opportunities to become more involved in school activities. Finally, they are given lunch with all of the other freshmen to help them get to know the others outside of their group.

The Freshman Focus is a great way to help new students learn about their school and their peers. This program has helped build relationships within the student body and has instilled a sense of Tiger Pride in each new freshman.

Freshman Fusion

At Grassfield High School, the Student Council hosts Freshman Fusion every year to help ease the anxiety freshmen feel. At Freshman Fusion Council members perform a skit that shows that high school is not as scary as some may think. After the skit they sit on the stage and open the conversation up to the audience for questions.

Council members also lead some icebreakers and sit down to answer questions with the freshman in the gym. The icebreakers allow the freshman to get to know their new classmates better because the incoming freshman class comes from two different middle schools—hence the Fusion in the title because they are fusing Wildcats and Mustangs into Grizzlies.

Other student leaders at Grassfield get involved by being tour guides to help guide the freshman around so they know where to go for the first day.

To wrap up Freshman Fusion there is a pep rally to showcase Grizzly spirit and show the new freshman all the pride students have in the school and how fun it can be to go to Grassfield. Participating in Freshman Fusion allows new freshman to get to know some students so once school starts they will see some familiar faces in the hallways and the huge school will not seem so big.

Spring Tours

Every year Orange County middle schools each take a day to bring incoming freshmen to the high school for tours of the school. These tours are given at the end of each school year on a designated day for each middle school.

Every tour of the school is given by a member of Orange County High School's SCA. tour guides meet in advance to assign starting locations and discuss what places are most important to show. Before the tours, students hear from the principal and guidance counselor.

"It is important that these students are able to see their future school as it normally functions rather than in an orientation setting," says council member Jarrett Long. "While guiding them around the school, we explain things like the lunch schedule. Often students have an interest or hobby and we can tell them how they can get involved. These tours are a real help for these students, for they already have an idea of where everything is before they receive their schedules."

Tie Dye Surprise

Massaponax SCA welcomes incoming freshmen during Freshmen day, when incoming students visit to tour the school, participate in games, and meet some of their classmates for the first time. The SCA executive board plans activities such as a freshmen pep rally and a tie-dye station where freshmen can buy a plain MHS Homecoming shirt for $10 along with a bag with instructions on how to treat the shirt after leaving. Board members explain multiple ways to tie the shirts into different designs. After putting bands on the shirts, students can dip their shirts into buckets of dye and leave with their first piece of Massaponax Panther merch. This event makes a large profit from selling the shirts, and we have a lot of fun getting the new freshmen into the Panther Spirit!

NASC Names 17 Virginia Councils as Gold National Councils of Excellence for 2019

Sixteen Virginia schools have been named to receive the highly-esteemed 2018 Gold National Council of Excellence Award by the National Association of Student Councils (NASC).

"Receiving an NASC National Council of Excellence Award indicates a dedication on the part of the local school to providing a strong, well-rounded student council program," says Anne Postlewaite, student programs director for the National Association of Secondary School Principals. "National StuCo applauds the work of the National Councils of Excellence and challenges them to continue their leadership and service to their schools and communities."

To meet the requirements for the National Council of Excellence Award, a student council must prove that it meets a variety of criteria. In addition to such basic requirements as a written constitution, regular meetings, a democratic election process, and membership in NASC, councils demonstrate such things as leadership training for council members, teacher/staff appreciation activities, student recognition programs, school and community service projects, spirit activities, goal setting, financial planning, and active participation in state and national student council associations. The award recognizes the work of each council during a calendar year. Awards are given at both the high school and middle school levels.

Congratulations to the following student councils for continuing to demonstrate exemplary efforts to build student leaders and to improve their schools and communities through the member's service, leadership, and activities:

Bayside High School
C.D. Hylton Senior High School
First Colonial High School
Floyd E. Kellam High School
Frank W. Cox High School
Grassfield High School
Green Run High School
Kempsville High School
Landstown High School
Ocean Lakes High School
Osbourn High School
Princess Anne High School
Salem High School
South Lakes High School
Tallwood High School
Western Branch Middle
Woodgrove High School

For more information on the process used to have your council designated as a Council of Excellence, go to *www.nasc.us/national-councils-of-excellence* for a listing of criteria and the application, which will be due February 15, 2020

2019 VSCA Adviser of the Year

A highlight of the VSCA Convention is the announcement of the adviser of the year at the banquet on Saturday evening.

This year's award was given to Jason King, adviser at Freedom High School in Loudoun County. Freedom served as the state president school this year.

Sidewalk Chalk Art Greetings

Liberty High School's student council works hard for all students to feel welcomed back to a new school year with everything from helping out orientation for freshmen and decorating bulletin boards to creating back to school gifts for teachers and welcoming students on their first day at school.

One activity they are proud of is doing sidewalk chalk art to create a welcoming atmosphere and to add color and vibrance to the campus. Student council members met before the start of school to create a variety of designs on the sidewalks. Some of these designs consisted of positive messages, motivational phrases, and dozens of school themed drawings.

"In past years, many students have appreciated this simple act of kindness and most of the chalk art stays intact for the remainder of year as students try not to step on the art," says Summer Markham, Region 5 VSCA Representative. This activity shows how simple it is to welcome students and spread kindness and motivation.