

School-wide renovations provide new amenities

w Zoe Ljubic
Editor in Chief

Returning to school Aug. 26, students encountered a variety of changes to the building, the result of a variety of summer renovation projects and relocation of services.

According to Assistant Principal of Operations Ryan McTague, the new Student Activities Center (SAC) was one of the more important changes that occurred this summer. The SAC has relocated into what was formally known as room 1601 A/B (and the wrestling gym before that) as part of the new student commons that has replaced the Oakton Lobby as an leisure-time alternative to the cafeteria.

McTague celebrated the luxury of such a large space. “[The student commons] is a completely functional space with lots of room. Access to the commons is now much easier for students to get to because of its convenient location. Because of its proximity to the SAC, “it helps student become aware of programs and activities offered by the school,” McTague said.

Not only can students go and enjoy their lunch the, the student commons may be used for clubs to hold meetings and other activities. Furthermore, McTague added, “The two kiosks right across from the gym provide a easy and accessible place for clubs to sell homecoming/prom tickets, sprit wear and other items such

as DECA’s ice cream.”

With the construction of the student commons, the major study hall from former room 1601 A/B has moved to the Oakton lobby. Former study hall 1601 A/B’s “sterile environment did not help students get their work done,” McTague said. “With the movement of a large study hall into the Oakton lobby, students

office. To accommodate the new AD’s office, first-year English/reading director Sanlida Cheng occupies the former SAC.

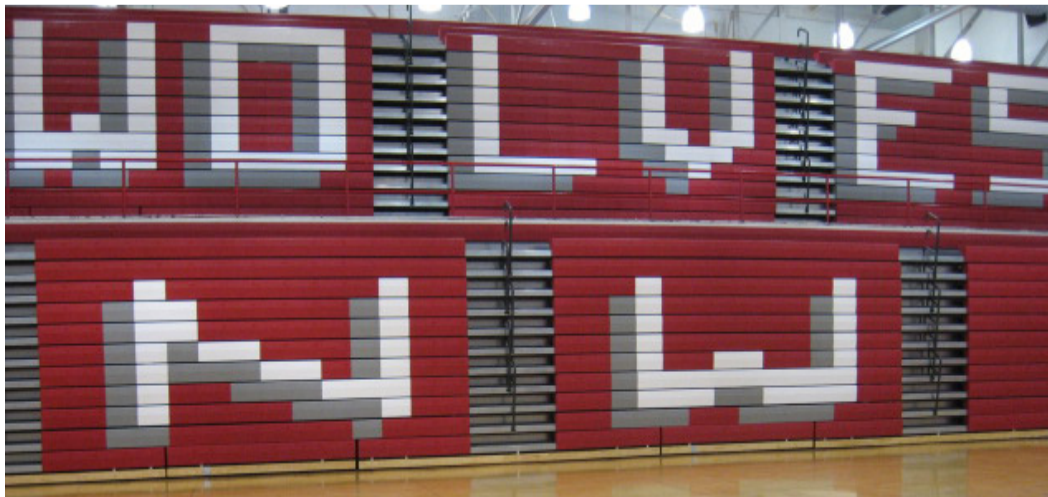
“When students need to walk all the way down to see their coaches and see when games are, things get really confusing. We have built the new athletic office to benefit our students. Our goal is to centralize all resources available,” McTague said.

McTague expressed the belief that the changes will make life easier for students, noting that the convenience of having the student commons, SAC, Literacy Center and athletic office within several feet of one another provides students with easy access to all these resources. “We want to make life easier for students by making these resources more accessible and to promote participation,” McTague said.

While most changes have affected the first floor, there were also some changes to the second floor, particularly, the computer lab. Last year, the computer lab was available to all students during study hall and lunch. This year, the computer lab has been restricted to classes only. “Since students were already choosing the [Information Resource Center] instead of the computer lab, we found by moving more computers into the IRC would benefit students,” McTague said.

The Contest Gym features another noticeable change—new bleachers. According to McTague, the old, wooden bleachers were broken and worn; new ones were imperative. Furthermore, McTague added, the installation of replacing pieces of the old bleachers was not cost-effective. “The new bleachers are plastic, making repair less expensive, and [they] will last us up to 50 years. They are maintenance-free, cost-effective and easier to manage,” McTague said.

These changes, along with the installation of MondoTurf™ on



New bleachers are cost-effective and maintenance-free.
Photo by Hira Malik

can be in a non-sterile environment with an open-air study hall to get work done in a different place,” he added. “We are doing the students a favor.”

The addition of school-specific athletic directors precipitated another change. To provide easy access, McTague said, new AD David Rosengard’s office occupies the space in the cafeteria hallway that formerly housed the English/reading director’s

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Names assembly helps freshmen adapt to diversity

w Bridget Van Der Bosch
Staff Writer

The third annual Names Assembly took place Thursday and Friday, Sept. 25-26 to help the freshman class’ assimilation into the school’s widely diverse student population.

A select group of sophomores, juniors and seniors partnered with the Anti-Defamation League to put together a series of personal essays and activities for the assembly.

“Names Can Really Hurt” was the topic of discussion, and there were two parts to the assembly. The first part of the assembly took place in the auditorium. The student panelists who wrote personal essays provided accounts of instances in which they bullied someone else, were bullied or saw someone else being bullied. In previous years, panelists have shared tales of cyber

Naviance, a college and career planning and many other instances in which students verbal targets.

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At the conclusion of the accounts, students and activities into classrooms for small workshops in which Naviance students who led activities that were designed to show students how to learn about diversity on a global scale. Of his freshman workshop experience, said, “It was really cool because we got to hear about what other people were being called, it was really interactive.” Many students felt the same way about the assembly as Nikolaou

According to College and Career Resource counselor Daniel Gin, Naviance will be the only class who has not attended the assembly. Although they have never been to an assembly, many seniors made sure to attend this year’s Names Assembly. “I wish I could have done it as a freshman because my younger sister enjoyed it. This is the best help [and guidance] in the world,” she said.

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District schools provide ‘green’ transportation options

w Suhail Ansari
World Editor

Superintendent Nanciann Gatta, in conjunction with the Board of Education, has spearheaded a new series of green initiatives to benefit teachers’ school atmosphere. The options include a staff shuttle from the Skokie Swift and the Morton Grove Metra Train Station to the two district schools before and after school, more bike racks at both schools and the project for bike paths around the Village of Skokie (Skokie).

According to executive director of security Jim DiJohn, this is a pilot program and green effort to increase the amount of people using public transportation and to also help faculty who already use public transportation and those who ride their bikes when the weather turns; this is all sponsored by the district. The work hours of two district security drivers have been altered so the shuttle is implemented without any additional labor costs. There is a loop of two drivers in the morning, and during the afternoon, the times are adjusted as teachers call the security office before they leave.

DiJohn said, “Any teachers that are at the stations can jump on and get a ride to school. Right now, we have three to five staff members at West that use the shuttle and two to three

at North, depending on the day. A lot of staff members have emailed and said that they will start taking the shuttle when the weather changes, if not every day then periodically. We expect that number to grow, and we hope that number grows because the district and superintendent are both dedicated to this program.” DiJohn went on to say that this is a staff benefit just like at any other company and should help improve the work atmosphere at the district.

Along with the new shuttle, new bike racks will be added to both campuses to accommodate the demand of students and faculty, according to DiJohn. North has started construction since they do not have the space for the new racks, and West will add them later this year. Also, in the idea stage, there could be designated bike racks at the train stations, and teachers can just ride his/her bike there and then get a ride to school via the shuttle or have designated bikes at North and West where a teacher who teaches at both schools can bike back and forth without having his/her own bike.

With focus on the bike as a green mode of transportation, also in the idea stage is the thought of designated bike paths in Skokie such as those in the City of Chicago. Since the district primarily serves Skokie, the idea is to have the village mark the paths along streets leading to the school, and in turn the district would help

promote and advertise the idea.

These new initiatives are meant to better the working atmosphere of the district. DiJohn said, “[Students] see [the employees] as teachers

and coaches, but from the administrative side, [the teachers] are our employees, and we want to make it a good place for them to work in,” he said.

CRISS training offers note-taking alternatives

w Nikki George
Staff Writer

New this year, CRISS (Creating Independence through Student-Owned Strategies) training has helped teachers to learn new note-taking strategies for students.

“[CRISS training] helps students learn the easiest way [to take notes] for themselves,” Principal Kaine Osburn said.

CRISS training enables students to discover note-taking strategies that are most beneficial individually rather than being forced to take notes a certain way.

According to the CRISS training website, www.projectcriss.com, “Project CRISS is a professional development program designed to help all students read, write, and learn more effectively.”

Some faculty and administrators already have taken CRISS training. English and reading

Director Sanlida Cheng and reading specialist Mary Rapp will conduct multiple training sessions this year.

“It is good to teach faculty now because when you get to college, no one is there to tell you how to take class notes effectively,” Osburn said.

The mission of the CRISS project “is to provide a research-based, national support system to educators throughout the curriculum that increases student-centered teaching, independent learning, and student achievement,” the organization’s website asserts.

Seventy teachers have already undergone CRISS training and an additional 60-70 teachers are currently being trained. By the end of this year, half of Niles West’s teachers are expected to undergo training, according to Osburn.

“Project CRISS fits into existing curricula. It is not necessary to change either the content or the materials used in any teaching situation; rather, CRISS advocates a change in teaching style,” the organization’s website notes.