

‘It feels like magic’: Hawlemont open house celebrates new school year

By BELLA LEVAVI, Staff Writer, Published: 9/15/2023 1:18:17 PM

CHARLEMONT — To celebrate the start of the school year, Hawlemont Regional School students and families enjoyed a meal together and explored the school building, playground and barn as part of an open house on Wednesday.

“It feels like magic,” Principal Amber Tulloch said about the start of the school year. “The school feels good, people are happy and the kids are doing a wonderful job.”

Tulloch said the school year started off smoothly with 68 enrolled students, a population that has 24 fewer students than last year. This represents a 26% decline in enrollment.

“Outside of the obvious problem that our numbers are lower than we want,” Tulloch said, “our curriculum is really strong, our assessment shows incredible growth in our kids and the summer program is hugely successful.”

One program that sets Hawlemont apart from surrounding schools is the Hawlemont, Agriculture and You (HAY) program. HAY instructor Jennifer Sinistore said students have been learning about seeds by exploring the garden boxes on the school grounds, and have been preparing the garden beds for the winter season by pulling out the weeds and preparing compost to cover them.

“The kids are really excited to come back,” Sinistore said.

Nearby farmers loan their animals to the school each year. This year, the HAY program has two goats, a pig and a sheep, as well as a calf that is expected to arrive soon. Students perform daily chores during school hours, taking care of the animals and learning responsibility.

During one of the days of extreme heat last week, Berkshire Pizzeria, located a short walk from the school, invited the entire student body to come to the restaurant for free ice cream. During the open house, it was announced that Berkshire Pizzeria will partner with the school again to offer a free pizza to all students who complete a reading program. Each student, depending on their class year, will have the opportunity to read a certain number of minutes in exchange for a free pizza.

“They have been a great partner with the school,” Tulloch said of the business.

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