West Mifflin Area School District
Alumni Newsletter 2025

West Mifflin Area School District is proud to announce the 2025 Distinguished Alumni recipients. Inside the Newsletter are bios of each recipient.

WEST MIFFLIN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
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Mr. Jeffrey T. Soles
Superintendent of Schools

Distinguished Alumni

September 6, 2024

It is a pleasure and honor to present the Distinguished Alumni Award at West Mifflin Area School District for the induction class of 2024. The District believes it is a good time to re-focus our attention on all the accomplishments of our graduates.

The District is very excited about the work and dedication of our Distinguished Alumni Committee. The administration conducted a search for local alumni to be part of this committee. We are pleased to have such a well-respected and dedicated group as we prepare to induct another class of Distinguished Alumni.

Our committee is a well-rounded assembly of graduates that represents West Mifflin Area in the areas of civic service, academics, arts, and athletics. It was a goal of the administration to select a person from each pillar of the school community to assist in recognizing other graduates whom have made an impact in their post-graduation years.

A Distinguished Alumni is a graduate that has made significant contributions in their professional or community life that have positively affected others. A rigorous process has been established by the administration and Alumni Committee to ensure deserving graduates can and will be recognized.

The District would like to thank our committee and administration for their hard work and efforts to ensure this endeavor will be successful. It is our goal through this program to provide guidance, hope, and pride in what has been achieved and what can be achieved by our students of West Mifflin Area School District. These Distinguished Alumni will be held in the highest regards for their accomplishments and become the inspiration for what a West Mifflin Area Graduate can achieve.
Again, thank you for your efforts and time throughout this commitment.
Sincerely,

Jeffrey Soles, Superintendent

Gwendolyn June Elliott (WM North Class of 1962)

Gwendolyn June (Campbell) Elliott, known as "Gwen," was a trailblazing leader and advocate born in McKeesport and raised in the Duquesne and the Homeville section of West Mifflin, graduating from West Mifflin North High School in 1962. Following graduation, she served in the United States Air Force, the Air National Guard, and the Army Reserves.

Gwen began her career with Allegheny County working with mental health programs and clients with intellectual disabilities. In 1976, following a court-ordered consent decree following a gender and race discrimination hiring practices case brought by NAACP, National Organization for Women and the Guardian of Greater Pittsburgh, she took the Pittsburgh police exam and became one of the first women hired by the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police.

Gwen went on to become the first woman promoted to both sergeant and commander. Her leadership roles included Night Watch Commander, Commander of Youth and Missing Persons, and Commander of Zone 3 Police Station. She also served as Assistant to the Mayor for Youth Policy. Committed to building trust between police and the community, she founded the Moms and Cops program, an initiative focused on building positive relationships between families and law enforcement.

Following her retirement, Gwen continued her legacy of service by founding Gwen's Girls, a nonprofit empowering at-risk girls, ages 8-18, through holistic, gender-specific programs. Since its founding in 2002, the organization has supported thousands of young women in building resilience and strong futures. Today, her daughter, Dr. Kathi Elliott, leads the organization, which remains an essential resource in the Pittsburgh area.

Gwen served on more than 25 boards and received numerous honors for her work in community service. She passed away on May 14, 2007, leaving behind a powerful legacy of advocacy, leadership, and transformation.

Ryan Farrell
(WM Area Class of 2006)

Ryan Farrell demonstrated academic excellence from an early age, entering school a year early and graduating as class valedictorian in 2006. While still in high school, he took college courses at Penn State McKeesport and maintained a perfect 5.0 GPA while enrolled in all advanced classes.

He earned a Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Engineering from Northwestern University, where he also served as co-chair of the university's Dance Marathon, raising funds for children with cancer.

Ryan went on to graduate summa cum laude from the University of Illinois College of Law, earning numerous honors including the Royal Order of the Coif, multiple CALI Awards, and the prestigious Rickert Award for ranking in the top 5% of his class. He also contributed to the University of Illinois Law Review and the Prisoner's Rights Research Project.

He began his legal career at Kirkland & Ellis LLP, advising clients on intellectual property, technology, and data-related issues in complex corporate transactions. He later broadened his experience at an artificial intelligence and machine learning startup, where he advised on a wide range of matters, from GDPR compliance and global corporate governance to federal highway safety regulations.

Today, Ryan serves as General Counsel for Pricefx, a global pricing software company. In this role, he leads the Risk & Compliance team and leverages over a decade of legal and strategic experience supporting complex, international technology businesses.

Ryan Kiray
(WM Area Class of 2006)

A 2006 graduate of West Mifflin Area High School, Ryan Kiray pursued higher education at the University of Pittsburgh, graduating magna cum laude in 2010 with dual degrees in History and Psychology, along with a certificate in Medieval and Renaissance Studies. Kiray went on to earn a cum laude J.D. from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law as the second-ever recipient of the Ralph J. Cappy Endowed Scholarship.

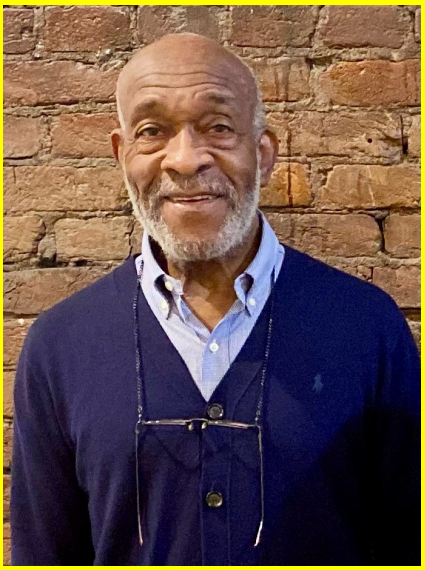
Ryan began his legal career as a contract attorney before joining the Allegheny County District Attorney's Office in 2014. Over the years, he has worked in the General Trial, Domestic Violence, and Arson Units before joining the Homicide Unit in 2020. Now serving as Deputy District Attorney, Ryan supervises homicide cases originating in the City of Pittsburgh and has served as lead attorney on over 40 homicide trials. He is a member of the Capital Case Review Committee and oversee Officer-Involved Critical Incident reviews.

Beyond the courtroom, Ryan is actively involved in legal education and community service. He serves as an adjunct Professor of Law at the University of Pittsburgh and volunteers his time mentoring first-year law students, helping them navigate the transition into law school and plan for their future careers.

He is also a member of the Board of Directors for the West Mifflin Community Foundation and serves as the attorney advisor for the WMASD high school's mock trial team. His ongoing commitment to justice, education, and civic engagement continues to make a meaningful impact on both the legal profession and the West Mifflin community.

Dr. Norman Randolph Sr. (WM North Class of 1965)

Dr. Norman Dennis Randolph, Sr., affectionately known as “Speedy” and “Doc,” was born in the Whitaker Projects of West Mifflin, the youngest of nine children.



He graduated from West Mifflin North High School in 1965 and, in 1967, proudly enlisted in the U.S. Army. Serving three years during the Vietnam War as a Service Battery Artilleryman, he rose to the rank of Sergeant Specialist 5th Class and was awarded the Bronze Star Medal, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, and the Army Commendation Medal.
Following his military service, Dr. Randolph pursued higher education with great dedication. He earned an Associate of Applied Science in Business Administration from the Community College of Allegheny County, followed by a Bachelor of Science in Business Education and a Master of Education from the University of Pittsburgh. In 1984, he earned a Doctorate of Education in Vocational Education and Higher Education Administration from the same institution.

Dr. Randolph began his teaching career at West Mifflin North High School in 1974, where he met fellow educator and future wife, Gladys Dixon. Over a distinguished career, he held numerous leadership roles, including business teacher, adjunct professor, assistant principal, principal of West Mifflin Middle School and Duquesne City Schools, and Assistant Superintendent of the West Mifflin School District. He also served in the Wilkinsburg School District as Director of Secondary Education, Federal Programs, Curriculum, and High School Principal.

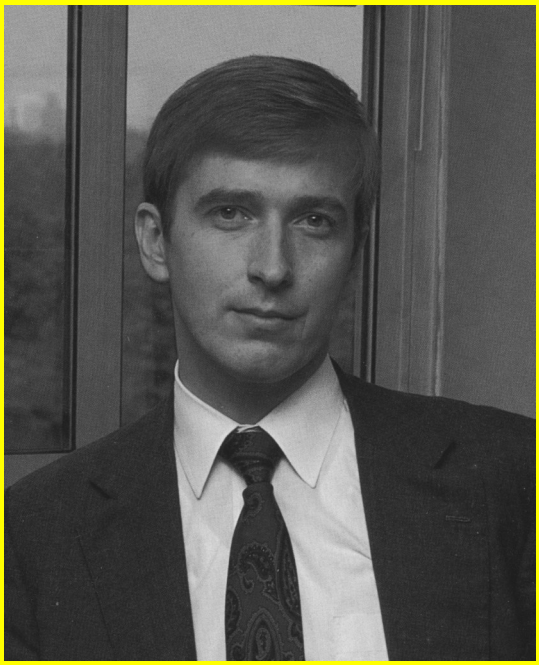
Even after his retirement in 2007, Dr. Randolph remained a dedicated mentor and advocate for educational equity. He volunteered to speak at schools, mentor educators, and encouraged African American youth to explore and take pride in their heritage.

A prolific author, Dr. Randolph wrote three books addressing critical issues facing youth and communities, as well as two genealogical works focused on his family history.

Dr. Randolph believed deeply in the transformative power of education, the importance of community, and honoring one’s roots. His enduring impact continues to resonate within the West Mifflin community and the broader Pittsburgh African American community.

Stephen Vajs
(WM North Class of 1969)

Stephen M. Vajs graduated from West Mifflin North High School in 1969 and went on to earn a B.A. in Economics from Michigan State University. He then pursued graduate studies at the University of Minnesota, earning both an M.A. in Economics and an M.S. in Statistics.



Stephen began his professional career at the U.S. Census Bureau, followed by work in software development for the U.S. Coast Guard and market analysis for the U.S. Postal Service. The majority of his career was spent at the U.S. Department of the Treasury, where he held leadership roles including Director of the Risk Management Division, Senior Advisor in Cash Management, Global Advisor in the Office of Technical Assistance, and Acting Director of the Debt Management Office during the 2008–2010 financial crisis.

He was recognized twice with the Secretary's Award, first in 1990 for developing the Treasury's first PC-based AI application, and again in 2008 for his contributions to debt portfolio management. After retiring from the Treasury, he served as a consultant to global organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the Bank for International Settlements, advising more than 20 ministries of finance across Africa, Europe, Asia, Central America, and the Caribbean.

Stephen currently resides in Vienna, Virginia with his wife, Kristin Moffat Vajs. His impactful career in public finance and international development reflects a lifelong dedication to excellence in economic policy and fiscal management.

West Mifflin Area Alumni Association

Special thanks to the following:

Distinguished Alumni Selection Committee

Mr. Mark Bonacci
Mrs. Belinda Eber
Mr. Michael Mazzarese
Mr. Bert Ogden
Mr. Gregory Rozgonyi

Distinguished Alumni Officers

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