

# The Standard-Journal



High 60  
Low 50  
Sunset  
7:43 p.m.

Warmer with afternoon showers

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**MONDAY**  
**APRIL 11, 2022**

NAMES MAKING  
NEWS TODAY:

THOMAS BOTSFORD

LOCAL NEWS, LOCAL SPORTS.  
SHOP LOCAL.

FUNERAL  
ARRANGEMENTS

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SPORTS

LEWISBURG BOYS  
LACROSSE PICKS UP  
WIN

TRACK AND FIELD  
TEAMS SCORE FIRSTS  
IN SELINSGROVE

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COMMUNITY



## An Easter prize winner



ADAM SLOTHER/THE STANDARD-JOURNAL

Landon Woodruff won the grand prize, a large stuffed chick, at the Kevin Johnson Memorial Community Easter Egg Hunt, held Saturday in Watsontown.

## CSIU teacher wins innovation grant



PROVIDED BY HEATHER TAGGART/CSIU

DEANA GAY

BY MATT STULBERG  
The Standard-Journal

SUNBURY — Play-doh might be “Fun to play with, not to eat,” but for preschool teacher Deana Gay, it’s also a powerful teaching tool.

Gay, who works at Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit’s (CSIU) Early Intervention Preschool program in Sunbury, was recently announced as a winner of the Pennsylvania State Education Association’s (PSEA) Innovative Teaching Grant for her project proposal, “The Power of Play-Doh.” The grant winners will receive \$1,000 to fund their

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projects, which Gay plans to use for the purchase of Play-Doh sensory kits.

“A lot of my kids have multiple different delays across the board. Some might have diagnoses like autism, speech delay... and they really gravitate towards Play-Doh,” said Gay.

The sensory kits provide an engaging way to teach young children with developmental delays, who might not respond to more traditional methods, she said.

In her proposal, Gay outlined a number of activities in which the kits can be used to help preschool students with developmental delays. Children, for example, can use the Play-Doh to build and

model subjects discussed in class, or use it to role-play stories read aloud in class to help with attention span and cognition.

“You need things that are really fun and engaging or they’re not going to do it,” she said, and stressed the importance of repetition in her lessons with her students to help them retain and replicate things they’ve learned.

The sensory kits, which include multiple components in addition to the Play-Doh, are often custom made and sold through internet storefronts like Etsy.

Gay had originally budgeted the grant money to purchase 40 pre-made kits online, but, since her

application for the grant in January, the prices for the kits have increased. Instead, Gay decided to purchase all the materials separately and made her own kits.

“We’re able to make almost double the amount of kits by buying the materials ourselves,” she said.

Gay said the kits range in theme from construction sites, to storybooks like “The Three Little Pigs,” to Disney’s “Frozen,” each with individualized components to provide unique activities for each kit.

“I was very excited to have won,” she said.

While most teachers in the U.S. receive money for classroom necessities, Gay said special items like the senso-

ry kits usually just aren’t in the budget.

“When it comes to extra things, or things you think the kids would really enjoy, we usually have to spend our own money on those things,” she said, noting that the grant award was vital in being able to secure the kits for CSIU classrooms.

Gay has been working in early childhood intervention for 30 years and has been a teacher at CSIU’s preschool program for the last 15 years. She says she’s always loved working with special needs children.

“Every day is different. It’s a lot of fun but a lot of work,” Gay said. “You don’t always get that everywhere, where you enjoy your job

and everyone you work with.”

Gay said being able to see the progress that her students make each year is what drives her passion for education.

“We see that moment every year, where you think back to the beginning of the year to what our kids looked like at the start, and when they’re walking out...they’re like completely different kids,” she said. “It’s very rewarding seeing those little moments.”

Gay will be attending a ceremony Friday, May 13, at the PSEA House of Delegates in Philadelphia to receive the award for her project.

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