

Commack Courier

August 2017

A Board of Education
Publication



The Class of 2017

Tradition and celebration abounded at Commack High School's Class of 2017 graduation ceremony.

Proud teachers, administrators, family, and friends were in attendance as the 566 graduates received their diplomas, presented by Board of Education members and Principal Leslie Boritz. The well-choreographed event was led by teacher James Desmond, and the music and speeches reminded students to cherish their pasts, to live in the present, and to anticipate and imagine the limitless possibilities in their futures.

Most of our graduates (95%) will be attending college. An impressive 21% of our seniors earned an International Baccalaureate Diploma, attesting to their academic dedication. Five of our seniors are entering the military, and we thank them in advance for their service.



First Day of School September 6, 2017

**Class Assignments/Schedules will be posted
on the Parent Portal.**

**Grades K-5: August 25
Grades 6-12: August 28**

Schedules will also be sent by mail.

Class Highlights

Graduation Rate	98.3%
Total Regents Diplomas	98.6%
Total Advanced Regents Diplomas	79.5%
Graduates Attending College	94.9%
Total Value of Scholarships	\$43,960,733
Graduates Receiving Scholarships/Awards	315
National Merit Scholarship Winner	1
National Merit Scholarship Semi-Finalists/Finalists	3
National Merit Scholarship Commended Students	11
National Hispanic Recognition Scholars	2
New York State Merit Scholarship	15
President's Award for Educational Excellence	239
President's Award for Educational Achievement	31

Nine Seniors Added to CHS Top Cohort Group

The students pictured below achieved final grade point averages that exceeded 100% and were added to Commack High School's Class of 2017 Top Cohort group. Congratulations!



Kevin Foley
Northeastern University



Emily Fox
State University of New York at New Paltz



Samantha Gray
University at Buffalo, State University of New York



Amanda Kurz
Sacred Heart University



Nadine Moawad
Stony Brook University



Kristin Orrach
University of Michigan



Dillon Oswald
Binghamton University



Hollyann Serp
University of Scranton



Elizabeth VanLoon
Seton Hall University

A New Commack Tradition! The Senior Walk



Commack High School seniors, adorned in cap and gown, boarded yellow school buses and returned to their primary schools. They were greeted by excited kindergarten, first, and second grade children bearing signs, cheering, chanting, and singing school songs. Teachers eagerly searched for their former students, and welcomed them back "home." A new Commack tradition is born! More photos and videos are on the website.

Superintendent's Welcome Message

After months of planning, we eagerly anticipate the start of a new school year and new beginnings. Over the summer, the Board of Education and I spent time working on District goals. The administrative team and I, along with many of our teachers, fine-tuned action plans to help bring these goals to fruition, and there is a great deal of excitement as we endeavor to provide the best possible balanced educational program for every student who enters our doors. As always, we will have an exceptional academic program in place to provide our students with the resources and opportunities they need to enhance learning and to prepare them for their futures.

Thanks to the support of our community and parents, and the excellence of our teachers, administrators, and support staff, we are confident that our schools will continue to be highly successful. As we sharpen our focus and refine curriculum to make it more appropriate, and bring forth even more enrichment and project-based learning for all students, we are confident that we are going beyond the rote memorization of information. We are truly endeavoring to stimulate innovative thinking, and to provide them with the skills they need to tackle real-world problems. Course offerings like engineering, literature and arts enrichment at the elementary and middle schools and our "Access and Opportunity" initiative at the High School provide a full range of courses available for all students. This helps students envision and prepare for their future. From our littlest kindergartners to our graduating seniors, the Commack School District continues to offer a choice of academic paths and varied opportunities for social growth through extracurricular activities that include athletics, clubs, and volunteer work to support a balanced program - one that supports all facets of development. Make no mistake, Commack Schools offer the finest academic program for all students; a program with robust options allowing students and parents choice of program

with opportunities to tailor their schedule to meet their needs, interests, and abilities.

In the area of advocacy, efforts by the District, Board of Education, PTAs and administration continue to reduce and refine testing of our students, and to return control to the local level, as does the fight to increase funding for public education and to reduce unfunded mandates by the State and Federal governments. We have seen some progress in the reduction of testing of our students in grades 3-8, but it is necessary to continue to pressure our elected officials until they get it right, as the State's testing program is still deeply flawed! The myopic and lock-step approach to testing young children along with the loss of valuable classroom time in the preparation, administration, and grading of these tests casts an unnecessary and unfunded burden on our children, teachers, and taxpayers. I urge all parents and community members to lobby for relief from unnecessary testing and for increased funding.

As always, we value the input and suggestions of community members, students, and parents. There are many different avenues to communicate with our District and its employees. Contact information and telephone numbers are posted on the [Commack Website](#). Please be sure to keep in touch with us by opting in for [community news emails](#), and I urge all parents and guardians to update their contact information on the [Parent Portal](#), and to opt in for text messaging and non-emergency phone calls.

Please feel free to send me an email at any time should you have questions or concerns. My email address is djames@commackschools.org.

Sincerely,

Dr. Donald James



WHAT'S HAPPENING!

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

September 6, 2017

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS

Thursday, September 14, 2017

Hubbs Administration Center at 8:00 p.m.*

Thursday, October 19, 2017

Commack High School at 7:30 p.m.*

*The Board will convene at 6:30 p.m. and is expected to adjourn into Executive Session. Public meetings will commence at times stated above.

9-11 CANDLELIGHT CEREMONY

Commack High School Heroes Memorial Track

6:30 p.m. All Welcome!

SCHOOL BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

KICK-OFF

Get involved in our schools! All local business and professionals welcome!

Thursday September 14, 2017 from 4-5 p.m.

Hubbs Administration Center Conf. Room D

HOMEcoming - September 23

Parade at 12 noon* followed by Alumni of Distinction and team festivities

Football Game Kick-Off at 2:30 p.m.

CCC RED RIBBON WEEK 5K RUN

Saturday, October 28, 2017

Free Kid's Walk at 8:30 a.m., 5K at 9 a.m.*

*Check the website for road closure information!

More info on the [Community Events](#) page on the

Commack Website

www.commackschools.org

Breakfast Program Waiver

Consistent with past years, the Commack Union Free School District has applied for, and received, a waiver of the school breakfast program. The waiver was requested after a poll of primary, intermediate, and middle school parents determined that the large majority of families would not avail themselves of a breakfast program. Interested parties may address comments or suggestions to the attention of Laura A. Newman, Assistant Superintendent for Business, PO Box 150, Commack, NY 11725.

Lunar Ice May Aid Future Space Exploration

The science research team of Karen, Delina, and Pragati took first place in the Exploration of the Moon and Asteroids by Secondary Students (ExMASS) Competition this year, and were invited to present their research at the NASA Exploration Science Forum in California in July. The students, along with Director of Science, Dr. Alison Offerman-Celentano, met NASA scientists, researchers, and astronauts.

Their research project "Mapping Possible Locations for Lunar Ice Mining Using Topographic, Economic, and Elemental Data," determined feasible locations to mine lunar H₂O ice. It was observed that the highest concentrations of hydrogen and oxygen were located at the lunar poles. Seven appropriate areas were pinpointed between the North and South Poles on the moon, and determined to be the most feasible to mine. Using data from lunar missions, the trio used ArcGIS software to map the data, and did a cost/benefit analysis to determine the best type of rocket and landing areas to mine lunar ice.

The students were assisted by research mentors Dr. Tabb C. Prissel from the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences at Rutgers University and Dr. Jennifer Whitten from the Center for Earth and Planetary Studies at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Mu-



ExMASS winners and Director of Science, Dr. Alison Offerman-Celentano, meet former astronaut (Apollo 17 mission) and geologist Jack Schmitt.

seum.

At the NASA Forum in California, our science researchers (who were the only high school students in attendance) attended talks from premier scientists in the planetary science fields including former astronauts, a former US Senator, and current research geologist Jack Schmitt, who walked on the moon during the Apollo 17 mission.

The students gave their lightning round presentation, which was continually lauded throughout the conference as one of, if not, the best, to entice the attending research scientists to visit their poster. They received a steady stream of visitors during the poster session and our three students answered

questions and engaged with professional scientists about their college and career aspirations.

At a behind-the-scenes tour of the NASA Ames Research Facility, one of the oldest and most diverse government facilities in our country, the students visited with New Horizons Mission scientist Dr. Oliver White to learn about the amazing discoveries emerging from the data sent back from the moon. The girls met former astronaut, Karol Bobko, and toured the Flight Simulation Laboratory, and visited the Intelligent Robotics Lab. They were able to see the Astrobee prototype, a robot that will be operating on the International Space Station to help astronauts with daily tasks.

After attending a panel

discussion about water on the moon, our students again received many professional scientists at their poster to share their research, and were awarded an honorable mention in the poster competition!

"The best part of the experience was being able to interact with professional scientists and being treated like equals. Getting out of the high school environment to see what type of research is actually happening in the field was uniquely rewarding," remarked Delina Levine and Pragati Muthukumar on the flight back to New York.

Director of Science, Dr. Alison Offerman-Celentano, accompanied the students to California. "This was an incredible opportunity for our rising juniors and one of the best prizes I could envision for placing first in a national competition. During no other time would students of this young age have the opportunity to not only attend a professional conference but to actively engage with researchers and graduate students. They made valuable contacts and learned tremendous life lessons in the areas of public speaking and professional networking.

Commack Welcomes New Director of Special Education

The Commack School District is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Kristi M. Keingstein as the Director of Special Education. Dr. Keingstein worked as a special education teacher in the North Shore and East Northport School Districts. Most recently, she served as an Assistant Principal, then a Special Education Supervisor in the Massapequa School District.

After earning her Bachelor's Degree from St. Joseph's College, Dr. Keingstein went on to receive her Master's Degree and Doctor of Education Degree from Long Island University. She lives in West Islip with her husband and three children. She enjoys spending her free time reading, bike riding,

and traveling with her family.

"Working with children with special needs has always been my focus and professional passion. Providing all students, regardless of their learning styles and needs, with a solid foundation of knowledge, social skills, and a love for learning is paramount to all success. I truly believe when dedicated professionals work together as a team, all students can meet their individual potential. I am looking forward to working with the amazing administration, staff, and community to continue a long history of excellence in special education. I am honored to work in a District that is known for its dedication to all the students within their schools."





Summer Scenes from our Schools



There is always something going on in our schools, and this summer the District hosted thousands of students in three different programs.

Commack students had the opportunity to create, cook, build, code, experiment, play music, act, dance, and enhance their skills at the SCOPE Summer Enrichment and Music Program, held at Burr. Summer School Principal, Dr. Nancy Lopes, said, "I really believe this has been the best year yet! We had nearly 300 students join us this summer for Art, Band, STEAM, Science, Survivor, Games, LEGOS, sports, Academic Reinforcement, ENL and our newest class: Computer Coding. Two favorites: Kids Cuisine and Drama Kids were so popular we had to double the teaching staff. Our halls were filled with laughter. We had seven college assistants join our staff

this summer, including Commack alumni. The teachers, assistants, office staff, and of course the kids just perfectly jelled...and the result was outstanding!"

Athletes of all ages joined in the fun at Cougar Camp at Commack High School. Taking the warmth and humidity in stride, more than 1,000 youngsters sharpened their athletic skills in sports such as baseball, football, soccer, tennis, track, field hockey, badminton, lacrosse, gymnastics, softball, fencing, cheerleading, dance-line, and kickline, under the supervision of teachers, coaches and our dedicated high school student volunteers.

Commack's extended year reinforcement program at Cedar Road School welcomed children who have special educational needs and require services to prevent summer learning loss. Smaller classes and

individualized instruction based off the students' IEP provide students with six weeks of reinforcing skills in bright and cheery surroundings and a relaxed atmosphere.

Our facilities department was busy with indoor renovations, repairs, and maintenance so that the buildings are ready for use when school begins. The gym floors at Wood Park and North Ridge were refinished, and other work included flooring, bathroom, and classroom renovations, air conditioning replacement, concrete and asphalt projects, and deep cleaning of the buildings. Approval was finally received from the State to remove the cement piers from the front of the high school. For more news, including playground upgrades at five of our schools, please see article listed under the "District News Bites" on the home page of the [Commack Website](#).

Advanced Lab Experiments: Summer Science



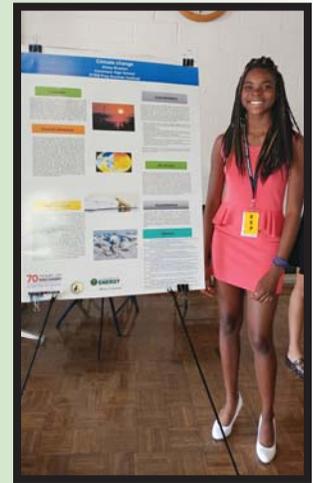
Four Commack High School freshman dedicated part of their summer doing scientific research at Brookhaven National Laboratory and Stony Brook University.

The Brookhaven National Laboratory STEM Prep Summer Institute is a four week program that introduces student to topics in physics, biology, chemistry, environmental sciences, and scientific computing as it relates to the research. Students hone their laboratory techniques and science and math skills as they conduct experiments and showcase what they learn through a poster session at the conclusion of the program. In photos are Candace and Alissa with their

posters.

The Stony Brook Biotechnology Summer Camp introduces motivated high school students to the techniques used in modern biotechnology research. The students learn concept and techniques and work in small groups or with a partner to develop and test a hypotheses in topic areas that interest them. Students then present their work to their classmates at the end of the session.

Charlson worked with students from Roslyn and Kings Park to mutate yeast using DNA. Amy and her partners from Lynbrook and Liceo Classico G.M. Dettori studied a possible genetic treatment for patients with Brugada syndrome.



Middle School Eighth Grade Awards Assembly



On their final day as eighth graders at Commack Middle School, a Departmental Awards Ceremony celebrated the accomplishments of the class. A slide show evoked fond memories and reminded the students of memorable events in their three years at CMS. Best wishes for four more successful years at Commack High School!

Future Business Leaders of America Attend National Convention

Commack High School's Future Business Leaders of America attended the State Leadership Conference in Rochester in April. Fourteen students participated in this amazing competition against other FBLA chapter across New York State.

The competitions included speaking and writing events and role-play. This year, for the first time, one of our students, Michelle Wolk, took home three awards.

The following students competed nationally in Anaheim, California this summer. "This is an amazing accomplishment and each of these students goes above and beyond to practice and get ready for these events," said Sandra Braun, club advisor. "I wish everyone could see the excitement of the awards ceremony and how many kids there are competing at the State level, truly a remarkable task."

- Abinaya & Melissa - 1st Place in Management Decision Making
- Rick - 4th Place in Networking Concepts
- Marcus - 3rd Place in Computer Game and Simulation
- Alexis - 1st Place in Entrepreneurship.
- Arai - 4th Place in Sales Presentation and 5th Place in Marketing
- Dennis - 5th Place in Marketing.
- Meredith - 3rd Place in Organizational Leadership
- Michelle - 1st Place in Entrepreneur-



ship, 2nd Place in Impromptu Speaking, and 2nd Place in Help Desk

In July, those who placed at the State level competed in the 2017 FBLA National Leadership Conference in Anaheim, California. Future Business Leaders of America is the largest career student organization in the world. Each year, FBLA helps over 230,000 members prepare for careers in business. A dress code to "uphold the professional image of the association and its members and to prepare students for the

business world" is required for all attendees, as is adhering to a strict code of conduct.

The three-day event included competitions, exhibitions, and workshops, attended by thousands of students from across the country.

Congratulations to Abinaya and Melissa, who were finalists and placed in the top 15 nationally in the Management and Decision Making category, a first for Commack High School.

Safe Driving Activist Award Winner:

That Text Message Can Wait!



Jessica is congratulated on her award by Principal Leslie Boritz (left) and Sara Decker, Social Worker.

Congratulations to Jessica, who was awarded the Suffolk County High School Principals Association Allstate Safe Driving Activist Award. She was one of only five high school seniors to win the award, along with a \$1,000 Scholarship.

Jessica strongly advocates against distracted driving as a leader in the SADD Club (Students Against Distracted Driving). She helped implement a program at the High School called "Impact Driving: What Do You Consider Lethal?" After undergoing training in conjunction with the Smithtown Youth Bureau and Stony Brook Hospital, Jessica and her peers presented powerful lessons to the about-to-be drivers at the High School.

Allstate Insurance Company

is actively seeking ways to raise awareness by sponsoring the award.

"Preventable motor vehicle crashes caused by teen drivers are the leading cause of death for teens in America today. Tragically, nearly 6,000 young people die in car crashes annually, and another 300,000 teens are injured in car crashes each year. Here on Long Island, we have experienced our fair share of tragedy. There are nearly 10,000 teen-related crashes a year in Nassau and Suffolk counties."

Social worker and club advisor Sara Decker said, "Jessica is a dynamic and kind student. Jessica's character reflects core value of a leader, and she believes in helping people make better choices for teens."

Back to School Checklist

- The [Back to School Section](#) on the website lists District information for all parents, as well as pages for your individual school(s).
- Check out important updates on the website, including school visitation dates, odd/even day schedules, spirit-wear fundraisers, and lots more on [Backpack News](#), [Lunch Menus](#), and the [Community Events](#) page.
- [All information for parents - click on the Parent button!](#) Don't forget to update your email address in the Parent Portal if it has changed.
- Opt in for text messaging by sending a text to 67587 and typing a Y as the message. This will enable you to receive texts as well as emails for school-parent messages.

Parents & Guardians

To continue receiving non-emergency communications from the Commack School District (texts and phone calls), you are required to grant us permission to contact you, due to recent clarifications by the FCC to the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA).

SchoolMessenger App for Parents

The SchoolMessenger App provides access to all the messages and information sent by the Commack School District. Accessible from any internet-enabled device, the app visually displays and organizes alerts, notifications, and attachments for easy review and reference, and allows you to customize how you receive communications from our schools and District.

Once you've created your account, the records associated with your email address will be linked automatically. You can then:

- View the records associated with your account.
- Review the last 30 days worth of messages for all your children.
- View your contact information, and configure how you'd like to receive notifications.

For detailed instructions, click the Parent button on the home page of the website.

Fall Athletic Tryouts

August 21 - 7am

All High School Fall Sports

August 22 - 5pm

Girls Volleyball

September 7 - After School

Commack Middle School - All Fall Sports

Check the [Calendar](#) on the Website for dates and times for Athletic Physicals & Form Drop-offs.

Athletic Kudos to:

- Suffolk County Pole Vault Champions Amanda McNelis and Ryan Lawless.



NOMINATE AN ALUMNUS OF DISTINCTION



Each year the Commack High School honors Commack alumni based on career achievements, community involvement, charitable work, etc. An award ceremony is part of the pre-game festivities featured at the Commack High School Homecoming on September 23. Nomination forms are posted on the Commack Website. The deadline for nominations is extended to August 28, 2017.

Notice of Nondiscrimination

The Commack Union Free School District does not discriminate on the basis of an individual's actual or perceived race, color, religion, creed, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship status, age, marital status, partnership status, disability, predisposing genetic characteristics, sexual orientation, gender (sex), military status, veteran status, domestic violence victim status or political affiliation, and additionally does not discriminate against students on the basis of weight, gender identity, gender expression, and religious practices or any other basis prohibited by New York State and/or federal non-discrimination laws in employment or its programs and activities. The District provides equal access to community and youth organizations.



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