

## National Merit Scholarship Recognition for Commack's Semi-Finalists and Commended Students



Commack's National Merit Semifinalists and Commended students were recognized by the Board of Education at the November meeting. All three Semifinalists received a perfect score on at least two portions of the SAT exam, and one student had a perfect score across the board. These academically talented high school seniors have an opportunity to continue in the competition for some 7,500 National Merit Scholarships worth about \$33 million that will be decided in the spring.

About 1.6 million juniors in more than 22,000 high schools entered the 2017 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2015 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®), which served as an initial screening of program entrants. The nationwide pool of Semifinalists, representing less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors, includes the highest scoring entrants in each state. Merit Scholar designees are selected on the basis of their skills, accomplishments, and potential for success in rigorous college studies, without regard to gender, race, ethnic origin, or religious preference.

Commended students placed among the top five percent of more than 1.6 million students who entered the 2017 competition. These students are being recognized for their exceptional academic promise.

"As you can imagine, each of these students have very bright futures ahead of them and will be applying to some of the best colleges and universities in the country," stated Jonathan Macaluso, Director of Guidance. "We are hopeful that our three Semifinalist will continue on in the competition be named National Merit Scholarship Winners."

*The Board of Education, along with Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Donald James, Director of Guidance, Jonathan Macaluso, and High School Principal, Leslie Boritz, congratulate Commack High School students on their outstanding achievements.*

### National Merit Semifinalists \*

Zack  
Joshua  
Johann

### National Merit Commended Students

James  
Nicholas  
Blake  
Jordan  
Gabriel  
Christine  
Frederick  
Kyle  
Kristen  
Matthew  
Peter

### Winter & Severe Weather Messaging

If a decision is made to delay opening or to close our schools due to inclement weather, we will post a message on the Commack Website and contact parents via phone, email, and text. You can control how we contact you via our [InfoCenter App](#).

**For more info & to download the app:**  
<http://www.commack.k12.ny.us/infocenter.aspx>

### Keep in Touch!

It's easy! Parents are automatically enrolled in our messaging system, and community members and parents alike can opt in for community alerts via [Community Connect Email Notification](#). To sign up, just click the link under the Community News button on the home page of the new Commack Website.

[www.commackschool.org](http://www.commackschool.org)

\*Students' last names are not published in the online edition.

## Commack High School Recognized for Creating Optimal Learning Environment

Commack High School was recognized with the 2016 Inviting School Award from The International Alliance for Invitational Education for its positive climate initiative and successful strategies for creating the optimal environment for teaching and learning. Respect, Trust, Care, Optimism and Intentionality are the qualities that the awards committee and school assessors found consistently among the people and practices at the school.

During the 2015-2016 school year, more than 50 Hong Kong delegates representing the International Alliance for Invitational Education were welcomed by the staff and students at Commack High School. The High School was chosen for the visit with the overseas educators and students because of its outstanding learning environment that addresses each of the Five P's (Places, People, Programs, Policies, and Processes) in its educational setting for students, parents, staff, and the community. In the spring of this year, the High School initiated an "Ambassador Program," inviting the community and parents to attend classes during the school day that centered around the arts and humanities, STEM classes (science, technology, engineering and math), or college and careers programs

that included IB and AP classes.

"The Ambassador Program at the High School offered our stakeholders a wonderful opportunity to really see and experience what goes on inside classrooms," said Dr. Donald James, Superintendent of Commack Schools. "Student ambassadors guided the visitors around the building and answered questions, adding a very special touch to the tours. The program was such a success that we plan to expand it to our other schools in the coming year." See page 3 for the dates.

The award was accepted on behalf of Commack High School by Assistant Principal, Susan Shapiro, Librarian, Ann Libbey, and English teacher, Courtney Palazzo (holding banner in photo), at the IAIE World Conference, held in Lexington, Kentucky. "We are grateful to be recognized as an Inviting School. Our Commack High School family feels welcomed, invited, and loved



on a daily basis. The creators of the Award Portfolio, Sandra Braun, Ann Libbey, Courtney Palazzo, and Kim Radziul documented and highlighted the many 'People, Places, Processes, Programs, and Policies.' We are proud to accept this prestigious award on behalf of our entire Commack High School Family. With intentionality, we will continue to facilitate the inviting school Commack has become."

In photo, from left to right: Superintendent of Schools in Jessamine County Kathy Fields; IAIE Trustees Allyson Schoenhein and Edward Gwazdauskas; Susan Shapiro, Ann Libbey, Courtney Palazzo, and IAIE Trustees William Purkey and Joan Fretz.

## ENDANGERED ANIMALS - CMS Embarks on an International Effort

*Animal endangerment is the unintended consequence of human action*

Art teacher Grace Barrett's latest outreach is a project that has propelled her students across the globe to collaborate as authors and illustrators.

**Endangermalia.... Before It's Too Late**, was researched and illustrated by seventh and eighth grade students from Commack Middle School's Creative Connections elective class and art students who attend Saigon South International School in Vietnam. This transcontinental effort began when Mrs. Barrett met Rebecca Jardin, a teacher in Vietnam, through a Middle Years Program, and the two began communicating.

**Endangermalia....Before It's Too Late** is based on the students' and teachers' engagement with author and illustrator, Graeme Base's



well-known children's book, **Animalia**. The students enthusiastically and actively united through the common goal of educating and raising awareness for endangered animals. As creative advocates for these animals, the students used their voices and artistic skills to help entertain and provide the readers with the opportunity to raise funds for the World Wildlife Fund. The organization's mission

is to aid in the global conservation of endangered animals and their habitats.

The students here and in Vietnam formed groups of three to collaborate on the book. A bit tricky because of the time difference, the children communicated through the program Edmodo, and illustrations and photos flew back and forth as the book began to take shape. A memorable video-chat was arranged so the students could finally meet their new friends face-to-face.

The book consists of two parts. The first part uses playful alliteration and elaborate illustrations to introduce you to a select group of endangered animals in alphabetical order. The second part offers you a slightly more in depth view of the animal, its location and habitat and lastly, a documented explanation of why that animal is facing endangerment. If you'd like to help support the WWF, the book is available for purchase at [www.lulu.com/spotlight/Endangermalia](http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/Endangermalia).



## Superintendent's Message

As we begin the new year, I look forward to both the growth and successes that we will share in 2017 as we work together to provide our students with all they need to succeed. This is the time of year for rejoicing and renewal and I welcome a new year full of possibilities and fresh beginnings.

In late December the Board of Education approved a new contract for the teachers that extends until 2021; a contract that will keep us within the tax cap and help us maintain the programs we all value. We very much appreciate the efforts of all those who had the foresight and good judgment to bring us to this mutually beneficial outcome.

The new contract provides both short and long-term savings to support the District's financial stability, and reduces costs by slowing salary growth through a "smoothing" of step increases and reducing salary for newly-hired teachers. Through the new salary schedule, legacy costs for a teacher are reduced by \$250,000 over the life of a 30-year career, and additional savings will be realized through anticipated teacher retirements.

The contract also enhances the communication between teachers, parents, and students' families, providing for increased use of technology to relay important information about student progress and initiatives. For more information, please see the presentation at [www.commackschools.org/Downloads/12-22-16presentation.pdf](http://www.commackschools.org/Downloads/12-22-16presentation.pdf).

It's going to be a great year and I wish you all the best in 2017 and beyond!

Sincerely,  
*Donald James, Ed.D.*  
 Superintendent, Commack School District



## WHAT'S HAPPENING!

### BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS

Thursday, January 26, 2017  
 Hubbs Administration Center at 8:00 p.m.\*

Thursday, February 16, 2017  
 Hubbs Administration Center at 8:00 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.

### ART WALK/MUSIC CONCERT

February 13, 2017  
 Commack Middle School at 6:00 p.m.

### WINTER RECESS-SCHOOL CLOSED

February 20-24, 2017

Click the Community Events link on the Commack Website for more events  
[www.commackschools.org](http://www.commackschools.org)

Follow us on Twitter  
 @Commack Schools

If you would like to see what goes on in our schools on a daily basis, follow us on Twitter @commackschools. You don't need to have an account to see our Tweets - just click the blue bird on the top of the Commack Website's home page!

## Commack's Ambassador Program Invitational Education



All of our schools will be welcoming the community for visits during the school year. Look for more information on our new Commack Website. We hope you'll take the time to see some of the wonderful opportunities the Commack School District offers to its students!

The first of our award winning Invitational Education programs this school year was the "Hidden Gems of Commack High School." Our student ambassadors led parents and community members throughout the school, pointing out items of interest and visiting venues and classrooms with unique curriculum offerings such as TV Journalism, American Sign Language, Music Theory, Publishing, Dance, and Law. The tour concluded with refreshments in our student All-Star Cafe. To view a video and photos of the visit, please visit: [www.commack.k12.ny.us/ambassador.aspx](http://www.commack.k12.ny.us/ambassador.aspx).

## Visitation Dates:

<u>Building</u>	<u>Ambassador Date</u>
Indian Hollow	January 18
Rolling Hills	January 19
North Ridge	January 19
Wood Park	January 24
Middle School	January 25
High School	February 9
High School	April 4

# Commack Shows Unity in the Community for our Veterans



Students, coaches, staff, and administrators in the Commack School District showed their support of our veterans by participating in the 22 Pushup Challenge. A group of over 500 athletes outlined the entire football field and counted out their simultaneous pushups in unison. An American Flag covered 30 yards of the infield as the Commack community joined the efforts of Legislator Steve Stern and Signature Premiere Properties to raise awareness for veteran mental health issues.

Twenty-two is the number of veterans that take their own lives each day, hence the name "22 Pushup Challenge." The challenge is to complete 22

pushups each day for 22 days, and to challenge others to do so as well. After hearing of Legislator Stern's challenge, Commack Board of Education Vice President, Janine DiGirolamo, along with Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Donald James, organized the overwhelming stadium of support in two days with the help of enthusiastic teachers, coaches, and administrators. "This is an awesome sea of support for our veterans," stated Dr. James. "Our students and the entire Commack family always unite to support those in need."

"The more pushups com-

pleted, the more Signature will donate to the veterans, up to \$100,000," Steve Stern's press release stated. Hopefully,



*Commack High School Principal, Leslie Boritz (with microphone) thanks everyone for their support of our veterans. Also in photo (left to right): Superintendent of Schools Dr. Donald James, Laura A. Newman, Asst. Supt. For Business, Susan Shapiro and Michael Larson, CHS Assistant Principals, and Jason Fluger, coach and teacher, who led the crowd doing the pushups.*

ly, the turnout in Commack will push that closer to the goal.

## Saying Thanks on Veterans Day

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Burr third grade students wrote letters to a special Marine, CPL Anthony Broncatello, to thank him for his service to our country. Anthony is the nephew of Joanne Aloï, a secretary at Burr Intermediate School. Mrs. Aloï gave the students two pictures of Anthony so they could make a name to face connection; one of him as a child, and the other taken at his Marine graduation. The pictures hang in the front of their classroom as a reminder of his service to our country.

Mrs. D'Allesandro read the book, **Veterans, Heroes**

*in Our Neighborhood*, to the class, and a discussion followed about how veterans are ordinary people in our families or neighborhood who do extraordinary things.

The students enjoyed sharing personal stories of family members who are currently serving, or who have previously served, in the armed forces. Although the students addressed their letters to CPL Broncatello, currently stationed in Bahrain, they were excited to find out he will share them with his Marine friends to brighten their day as well.



At Sawmill, students and staff asked, "How should you thank our American heroes?" The reply: "Any way you can!" This Veteran's Day, Sawmill's Student Council thanked the veterans in our area by collecting Halloween candy for our local veterans to enjoy, and brought in cans of soup to thank the vets for their SOUP-er service to our country. Students also designed handmade cards and letters to show their appreciation.

Vietnam veteran and Commack resident, Fred Granger,

came by to receive the goodies, saying "Thank you all so much! It's really great of you kids to remember us like this!" After shaking hands and sharing smiles, Mr. Granger was off to deliver the cards, cans, and candy to the Veterans' Association of Northport.

The Student Council, along with advisors Mrs. O'Grady, Mrs. Woolley, and Mrs. Keen, would like to thank the Sawmill community for all their help in showing the veterans how valuable they are to us all.

# Homecoming 2016

After postponing Homecoming for a week due to some miserable weather, October 29 was a gorgeous day to celebrate school and community spirit. Beginning with the parade, enthusiasm and Commack pride was as visible as the school's gold and black colors.



Student Council planned all the events, and the day was filled with football, festivities, music, food, and good fun.

Once again, the Commack Volunteer Fire Department and the Suffolk County Police Department led the parade, and Fire Department erected the huge American Flag at the entrance to the field. Our thanks go out to all the volun-



teers and employees who did their part to make it an enjoyable experience for everyone in attendance.

The Marching Band and our



Commack Cougarettes and Cheerleaders shone during half-time, and the Cougars played valiantly but lost a close game. Presentations and recognition of

the moms and dads by the seniors brought tears and smiles as parents proudly accepted flowers and hugs and kisses from their future



graduates. All in all, a very special day to always remember!



## You Can Come Home Again! Alumni of Distinction



The honorees receive congratulations from high school administrators. From left to right: Assistant Principals Michael Larson and Susan Shapiro, Alumni of Distinction Steven Cohn, Andrew Stein, and Rob Trotta, Principal Leslie Boritz and Assistant Principal Matt Keltos.

This fall, Commack High School honored three graduates who have made a difference in the lives of others: Steven D. Cohn, Andrew B. Stein, and Robert Trotta.

Steven Cohn (1987), an inspired communication specialist, is the founder of Write It For Me, a business that since 2003 has provided strategic grant writing, report writing, proposal creation, research, evaluation, and consulting services to passion-driven organizations. Between 2004 and 2016, Steve's grant pursuit leadership has led his mid-size clients and partnering organizations to win multi-year awards in excess of \$62 million.

Andrew Stein (1982) is the Founder and Executive Chairman of Orphaned Starfish Foundation, which helps orphans, victims of abuse, and at-risk children worldwide escape their cycles of poverty and abuse through education and job training. The foundation now serves over 10,000 children

in 50 programs in 25 countries around the globe, including here in the U.S.

Rob Trotta (1979), is a life-long resident of Smithtown who has dedicated his life to public service. He has served as a Suffolk County Police Officer, earning accolades as "Cop of the Year" and "Detective of the Year." He was assigned to the FBI Violent Crime Task Force, where he worked on complex cases ranging from money laundering to confiscating large quantities of cocaine from our streets. Rob has been active with several local organizations and helped lead the effort to prevent the development on the former Kings Park State Hospital property, and won state support for the transfer of the 365 acre property to New York State Parks Department. Rob now serves as a Suffolk County Legislator, with the goal of making county government more efficient and exposing wide spread corruption.

# Thankful Giving



Many families on Long Island are having a hard time making ends meet and need some help. The classes at Rolling Hills celebrated Thanksgiving by giving back to the community. The children made "Happy Thanksgiving Meal" bags to donate to Long Island Cares - The Harry Chapin

Food Bank, in Hauppauge.

The children decorated lunch bags with Thanksgiving pictures and filled each bag with food, a drink, a snack, a small toy, and of course good wishes. In addition, each child designed a laminated Thanksgiving-themed place mat to go along with the "Happy Meal."



Throughout the District, food was collected for donation to various local agencies and families for the holidays. Pictured are Commack Middle School Student Council Members with just a small portion of the bounty collected for Island Harvest.



*Not everyone gets to go home for the holidays, and that includes our servicemen and women. Commack came through again with two campaigns: "Support our Troops," and "Show Your Thanks," collecting food, supplies, and gift cards to show we're thinking of our troops, no matter where they're stationed.*

*Mr. Trebour's class at Burr put their math skills to good use, shopping to fill the baskets and boxes to send to Marines stationed here on Long Island, and to their families as well.*



## It's All Business for These Emerging Leaders



Commack High School business and art students won accolades in the Huntington Chamber of Commerce Emerging Leaders Business Competition.

Most of the events require the students to prepare a Shark Tank-type pitch addressing a particular business scenario. Topics included: Human Resources, Graphic Design, Sports Marketing, and Hospitality Management. There were also three job interview categories.

These events are all judged by local business professionals, and 18 schools attended from across the island with over 300 students competing.

Congratulations to Michelle, who took 1st Place in Retail Marketing; to Abinaya and Esther who won 2nd Place in Travel and Tourism; to Alyssa and Nicole for their 2nd Place in Not for Profit Fund-Raising; and to Sean and Vincent, who won 2nd Place in Hospitality Services. Third place in Graphic Design was awarded to Ari and Mackenzie, and 3rd Place in Sports Marketing went to Jonathan and Sean.

# From our Hearts to Yours



Mrs. Keen's fifth grade class at Mandracchia Sawmill Intermediate School teamed up with the non-profit, We the People United, to help feed local families in need by adopting three local families. The class collected everything you would need to make a traditional Thanksgiving feast and made a festive turkey wreath for each family. The founder of the non-profit, Mrs. Judith Boggio, spoke with the children about the struggles of needy families on Long Island, what the organization does to help them, and a reminder to be thankful for what we have in our lives.



The holiday season has come to a close but not before the students and staff at Sawmill could bring good cheer to our fellow man.



This year, all of our schools and offices were overwhelmed by the community's response to the annual Toys for Tots drive, sponsored by the Marines, who distribute the collected toys to needy children.

In addition to giving material gifts, the Student Council representatives made beautiful holiday cards using their handprints and thumbprints that were delivered to Gurwin Nursing Home and St. Catherine's Nursing Home to spread the holiday cheer. Thank you again to everyone who helped in making this season of giving a success. We hope you have a happy and healthy 2017.



## and... Let's Not Forget our Four-Legged Friends!



This holiday season, the Cause Four Paws Club at Commack High School came together to brighten the lives of animals in need. Club advisers, Mrs. Laura Revera and Mrs. Andrea Goldstein, along with forty student members, decided to create and donate homemade toys and treats for local animal shelters where animals spend many hours in small cages with little to no interactions with others. Club members baked delicious dog and cat treats by mixing all-natural ingredients, such as pumpkin and oats, cutting them out into bone-shaped treats. They also collected empty water bottles, old T-shirts, and yarn in order to create playful toys. The toys and treats were delivered to Little Shelter Animal Rescue in Huntington and Save-A-Pet Animal Shelter in Port Jefferson Station.

The Cause Four Paws club will also be holding a Valentine's Day Pet Drive throughout the month of February to collect additional supplies for local shelters, such as towels, food, and beds. Animal shelters across Long Island gladly accept donations throughout the year, and you can visit their websites to see how you can help!



## County and State Recognition for Commack's Musically Gifted Students



Twenty-five of Commack High School's finest student musicians were recognized for their exceptional talents, performing in the annual High School All-County Festival that was sponsored by the New York State Council of Administrators of Music Education/ Suffolk County Chapter (NYSCAME/Suffolk County Chapter) and the Suffolk County Music Educators' Association (SCMEA).

Those students selected to perform in the All-County Band, Mixed Chorus, Women's Chorus, and Orchestra go through

a rigorous evaluation process and competitive auditions based on the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) standards adjudicated by music educators.

"Performing in this yearly event is one of the highest honors a student can achieve on the county level. We are extremely proud to have these young talented musicians represent the music department in this, and other well-known music festivals," stated Paul R. Infante, Director of Fine and Applied Arts.

Nine Commack High School instrumental and vocal musicians were selected to participate in the 2016 New York State School Music Association All-State Winter Conference.

The selection of these talented students followed competitive auditions involving thousands of music students from throughout New York State. During a lengthy selection process that takes place during the summer, chairpersons from across the state gather to select the finest musicians to perform in various All-State Ensembles. The concerts took place this past December in the Eastman Theater, located in Rochester, New York.

"Being selected to perform in an All-State ensemble is quite an honor," stated Mr. Paul R. Infante, Director of Fine and Applied Arts. "These are the top musicians throughout New York State and we are proud to have them represent Commack Schools."



## Down on the Farm

The Indian Hollow kindergartners welcomed autumn with their annual trip to Schmitt's farm in Melville. The children learned about the life cycle of the pumpkin and then were able to choose a pumpkin to take home.

After being shown how to properly pick vegetables grown on the farm, the children had a chance to put this new knowledge to the test by picking radishes and green beans fresh from the garden. Teacher Lori Busch said, "Our experience at the farm was a wonderful enhancement to the kindergarten curriculum as it pertains to living things and life cycles."

In photo is Mrs. Busch's class with their pumpkins.



## Acclaimed Actor and Scholar Visits CHS

In early December, Commack High School hosted a special guest in the English and Theatre Departments. Ben Crystal is an internationally renowned actor, author, and scholar who specializes in the work of William Shakespeare. Along with two members of his New York acting company, Crystal conducted a workshop for IB Theater students during the school day and then a professional development session for English teachers in the afternoon.

The workshop for students was largely focused on physical theater. The students worked on attention to the present moment and awareness of the smallest bodily movements. They came together in various exercises that stressed non-verbal communication and synchronized movement. These activities are meant for actors to build the capacity of an ensemble and to target specific concerns such as speed, distance and tension.

The start of the workshop for teachers was a discussion on the challenges

of teaching Shakespeare. The group shared ways to make the works relevant and meaningful to students in the 21st century. Crystal stressed that these plays were never meant to be studied purely as text; they should be heard out loud and performed. Accordingly, the workshop proceeded to an activity in which pairs of teachers performed excerpts of scenes involving verbal conflict.

Finally, the two members of Crystal's acting company performed a scene from "Macbeth." After a first run through, the teachers watched as Crystal gave his actors notes and direction. The revised performance of the scene concluded a truly remarkable afternoon for students and teachers at CHS.



A veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, who happens to be their teacher's spouse, visited with Mrs. Frank's first grade class at North Ridge Primary School. SPC Bryan Frank served in Tikrit, Iraq as an analyst in the intelligence squad of the Army National Guard. Mr. Frank showed the children pictures from his time in Iraq and answered their many questions about his service to our country.

## Honoring Those Who Served



Commack High School collected coats and clothing for our veterans.



The children in Meagan Harbin's class at Burr sewed red, white, and blue mesh bookmarks for their Veterans Day project. The bookmarks were donated to the veterans receiving care at the Northport VA Hospital.



Wood Park children in Room 16 read the PebbleGo book about veterans. Teachers Tonya Stahlmann and Justine Buonolonta (sisters) shared their Dad's helmet from when he was wounded as a Marine in the Vietnam War. The children wrote letters to the Veterans and colored pictures to share.



# From Seedlings to Harvest

## New Class at CHS



This year, an exciting new partnership between the Science Department and the Special Education Department began. Teachers Ryan McGrath and Darryle Eisner are involved in a new course that focuses on the various aspects of food production. Utilizing the newly renovated greenhouse in the high school courtyard, students from the 8-1-2 special education program cultivated vegetables and became fa-

miliar with the hands-on work of growing vegetables from seed to harvest.

"It is a wonderful thing to see the students in class planting seeds to grow vegetables while learning how to care for the seedlings and eventually harvest the vegetables," stated Mr. McGrath.

In photo, students learn about different ornamentals, vegetables and herbs in their Life Science Skills class.

### Let Your Imagination Fly!



Congratulations to Jake, a sixth grader and a National PTA 2016 Reflections winner. His imaginative original film during the "Let Your Imagination Fly" campaign was chosen to be on display in Washington, D.C.

Jake will be honored this month at the U.S. Dept. of Education for his work. Jake is balancing school with his acting career, appearing in *Kinky Boots* on Broadway, and has had parts in movies and television programs! If you'd like to view his winning video: <https://youtu.be/OWazWeZ6v00>.

In photo with Jake are Anthony Davidson, Principal at Commack Middle School, and Evelyn Cardenas Smith, Assistant Principal at Sawmill.

## Pajama Days a Huge Success!



If you had a chance to visit Burr Intermediate School or Indian Hollow Primary School, you would have noticed students and staff wearing something very comfortable to school - their pajamas! Students were encouraged to "wear a pair and bring a pair" in order to support Stony Brook Hospital's Child Life Services. Over 600 sets of

pajamas were collected to help children be comfortable during their stay in the hospital.

The Child Life Services Department at Stony Brook Children's Hospital is an integral part of the hospital experience for children. The team members explain what is happening in child-friendly ways, 'normalizing' the hospital experience, offering tours

and other orientation activities, keeping play at the forefront, and providing therapeutic, educational, and recreational activities that meet the unique needs of each child. Children staying overnight receive a Child Life Welcome Kit which includes a new set of pajamas, books, toys, and sometimes even video games!

# Commack High School's Award Winning Publications



At the Empire State Scholastic Press Association's annual state-wide journalism competition, both *The Courant* newspaper and the *Crossroads Yearbook* were ranked Gold/All New York publications.

*The Courant* was honored with 21 individual awards and *Crossroads* was awarded a record-setting 33 individual awards!

Congratulations to the following students:

### THE COURANT 2015-2016

Seniors: Zack, Ray, Megan, James, and Sydney

Class of 2016 graduates: Katherine Elliott, Judy Mermelstein, Brooke Novello, Anna Tobin, and Maya Wang.

### CROSSROADS 2016 Edition

Juniors: Ashley, Angelina, Kayla, and Taylor

Seniors: Michael and Fiona

Class of 2016 graduates: Ingrid Angulo, Isabell Geffner, Judy Mermelstein, Amy Sheinbaum, Diego Silva, and Patrick Wrynn.

## Shoe Box Surprise!



Service Learning projects abound at North Ridge Primary School where children and staff alike seek ways to help others. In the photo above, Cyndi Nichols and Donna Sandak's kindergarten classes created "Shoe Box Surprises" to give to homeless

children. The classes filled shoe boxes with toys, school supplies and personal care items, and then wrapped them. The gifts were donated to the Family Service League for holiday giving.

## Seven Habits Club



Students at Wood Park Primary School are very excited to be continuing their Principal's 200 Club again this year. The children love to be recognized for making good choices and practicing their "Seven Good Habits."

As part of the character education curriculum, the Seven Habits (proactive, beginning with an end in mind, put first things first, win-win, seek first to understand, then to be understood, synergize, and sharpen the saw) play an important role in teaching empathy and forethought.

In photo are the children honored in the late fall club with Principal Michelle Collison.

## POSTAL PATRON

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## Commack's Students Explore the Wonders of Science and Math



At Commack High School, internal assessments (IAs) are an integral part of the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. IAs in science provide students an opportunity to pursue a personal interest while demonstrating their skills and knowledge in the area of application. This is attempted without the time limitations and other constraints that are associated with taking an exam.

In November, three IB science classes,

Sports, Exercise and Health, HL and SL Biology, joined forces for a four and one half hour in-school field trip. The day involved over 100 students each working on individual ideas, which had been researched during the preceding weeks. This process ends with a six to twelve page laboratory write-up paper.

Science teacher Bob Smullen said, "As a teacher, it is inspiring to see students excited and personally engaged in a self-gen-

erated idea. It is my belief that the IA leads to a better understanding of the steps that each of them take to solve a problem."

In the photos above, biology students study the factors that effect the rate at which an enzyme works; using the enzyme Bromelain found in Pineapples, the effect of seaweed on radish seed growth, the effect of coffee beans (caffeine) on radish seed growth, and investigate exercise effects on the body.



Using the District's new "Math in Focus" curriculum, the children in Mrs. Schwartz's class at North Ridge created illustrations and a "Big Book" to review the concept of using Bar Models in problem solving in an interactive, hands-on activity.

## Historical Society Help Needed

The mission of the Commack Historical Committee is to collect, preserve, and display memorabilia representing the rich history of the Commack School District and community. The archives are filled with donations from the past 100+ years which need to be catalogued and digitized, and made available to the public.

Meetings are held the first Tuesday of the month, and the committee welcomes and is in need of new volunteers.

If you are interested, please contact Carolyn Gehlbach at (631) 912-2000 or by email [magnetcg@aol.com](mailto:magnetcg@aol.com).



Our youngest primary school students also explore the fascinating subject of science. A forensic toxicologist (parent Mrs. Ferraro) led an experiment in Mrs. Waldman's first grade class at Indian Hollow. The children created "slime" from various ingredients. "It was a great experience for the children, and it also made a very entertaining sound when squished!" said Principal Brian Simpson.



# Commack Courier

[www.commackschools.org](http://www.commackschools.org)

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