

NATIONAL MERIT SEMIFINALISTS



Four of our Commack High School seniors were named National Merit Semifinalists. These academically talented high school seniors have an opportunity to compete for one of 7,500 National Merit Scholarships. Winners will be announced in the spring and will share in scholarships totaling more than \$33 million.

Congratulations to Raphael Iskra, Nicole LaReddola, Daniel Lee, and William Liu, who earned this distinction through their high scores on the 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.

In photo, Principal Leslie Boritz and Superintendent Dr. Donald James offer their kudos to Semifinalists, from left to right: Raphael, Nicole, Daniel, and William.

BOARD OF EDUCATION APPRECIATION MONTH



Our Board Members in photo, from left to right: Steven Hartman, President; Pamela Verity, Trustee; Jarrett Behar, Vice President; Jennifer Carpenter, Trustee; and William Hender, Trustee.

Board of Education Appreciation Week was celebrated in October. These hard-working volunteers are elected by the Commack community to work with administration, staff, students, and constituents to provide educational goals, vision, and fiscal oversight. Board members are elected for three-year terms and meet often to formulate goals, review regulations and policy, recognize students for their many accomplishments, and approve expenditures. All meetings are open to the public. Dates and times are posted on the Commack Website. The Board would welcome your feedback.

Our Board members help us to maintain local control over our schools through advocacy at the state and federal level for public schools. They communicate the needs of the school district to the public and the public's expecta-

tions to the district.

Help us to honor these men and women who play such an important role in the oversight of our schools. Please make a special effort to tell each school board member that his or her hard work and untiring commitment is noticed and is very much appreciated.

At the October BOE meeting, students and staff prepared a special song and dedications to show their appreciation to our Board members. Meetings are simulcast on our website, and videos are also available for viewing after the meeting. Just click the Videos button on the website.

You can email the Board of Education or individual Board members. The email addresses can be found on the [Commack Website](#), or you can call the Board of Education at (631) 912-2055.

SENIOR CITIZEN GOLD CARD PROGRAM

The Senior Citizen Gold Card Program is designed especially for residents of the Commack School District aged 62 and over. This year's special activities include the High School's dramatic presentation of "Our Town," a musical on Thursday, March 15, 2018 at 1 p.m., and our annual Senior Citizens' Dinner/Dance on Friday, May 1, from 4 to 7 p.m. Immediately following the drama and musical, attendees are welcome to join us for dinner in the High School cafeteria, with student organizations

serving a nutritious dinner.

We are delighted to offer our seniors these wonderful events and have you see our students at their finest. This is your community; we hope you enjoy these talented and enthusiastic young adults.

Please be reminded that you are also invited to use your Gold Card to attend student athletic contests and student and faculty concerts. Check the district calendar or the [Commack Website](#) for the dates and times of upcoming events.

National Merit Commended Students

Commack High School's commended students placed among the top three percent of more than 1.6 million students who entered the 2018 competition. Based on PSAT test scores, these scholastically talented seniors are recognized for their exceptional academic promise.

Commended students are named on the basis of a nationally applied Selection Index score that may vary from year to year. Although Commended students do not continue in the competition for National Merit® Scholarships, some of these

students do become candidates for Special Scholarships sponsored by corporations and businesses.

Congratulations to: Matthew, Michael, Sophia, Siena, Andrew, Marissa, Brendan, Jake, Christian, Anoop, and Muzaffer.

In photo, students are congratulated by Amy Ryan, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment and Student Support Services; Lesile Boritz, Commack High School Principal, and Dr. Donald James, Superintendent of Schools.



Respect, Responsibility, Relationships: Commack Middle School Kicks Off PBIS



Over the past few years, Commack Middle School has dedicated much time and training to the unique needs of the adolescent learner. One major CMS initiative that builds on the focus of social-emotional learning is the use of Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS), a nationally-renowned, school-wide program. PBIS uses vast research to proactively create safe and positive learning environments for all students and staff by celebrating positive student behavior, fostering positive relationships, and equipping students with skills to handle difficult situations.

To help support PBIS, CMS staff has posted matrices of behavioral expectations in classrooms, hallways, and cafeterias. These posters serve both as visual

reminders and cues. Additionally, students are acknowledged for positive behavior with PAWS, which give them opportunities to earn prizes from a prize cart every Friday during lunch periods.

On September 20, CMS held a school-wide PBIS kickoff during which the entire school population rotated through three different experiences focused on three core CMS values: Respect, Responsibility, and Relationships.

Assistant Principal Carrie Lipenholtz expects, "The introduction and continued work through PBIS will help to foster positive relationships amongst students and staff. Through explicit teaching of our core values and participating in activities with all members of the Commack Middle School community, we will create a culture

built on mutual respect and responsibility in which positive behavior and personal connections between staff and students are the norm."

In photos above, students "Cross the Line," an interactive exercise to determine "Who do you respect?" and in the photo on the right, form a Friendship Web. One student throws a ball of yarn to another student who says his/her name and states a fact about themselves like a favorite sport, activity, movie, or TV show. At end of the activity, a teacher cuts the yarn and each student has a friendship bracelet to keep.

Would you like to know more? Be sure to check out a new web page on the CMS website (coming soon!): Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports at www.com-mackschools.org/pbis.aspx.

Superintendent's Message

We're off to a great start this year! Our exceptional academic program provides our students with access to all the resources and opportunities they need to enhance learning and to prepare them for their futures.

Our new Movement in the Arts curriculum, in

Grades K-5, has added a new facet to both our physical education and academic programs. Literature and arts enrichment begin in the elementary schools and continue through middle school. A full complement of courses at the High School that span every subject area, including college courses, AP courses, and our IB program offer numerous choices for all interests for each individual student as they look towards graduation. Athletics, clubs, and volunteer work all support a balanced program that supports all facets of development to meet their needs, interests, and abilities of our students.

Due to our ongoing energy efficiency efforts, eight of our buildings have achieved EPA Energy Star status. These eight designations make Commack UFSD the most awarded school district on Long Island, and third in New York State. All work was completed at no cost to our residents. This achievement demonstrates the ongoing commitment of the District to reduce our "carbon footprint," and reduce energy costs, while providing safe and efficient lighting, windows, roofs, boilers, and more.

Our community spirit was celebrated at Homecoming and once again our stands were filled for our annual 9-11 ceremony. We have joined in the relief efforts for those stricken by



Dr. James and BOE members accept the eight EPA Energy Star plaques from Johnson Controls representative Kieran Moran.

the hurricanes and "going pink" for breast cancer awareness. In this age of global awareness and our connections through technology, our teachers and students are reaching out with helping hands.

Our students and staff have garnered special recognitions. Christina Pawlowski, a Commack High School math teacher, was selected as one of only four NYS Teacher-of-the-Year finalists. We also have four National Merit Semifinalists and our athletic teams are doing very well. We are **Commack Proud!**

Before the cold weather and its accompanying storms ensue, please make sure your contact information is up to date, whether you are a parent ([Parent Portal](#)) or community member ([Community Connect Email Notification](#)). We encourage and value two-way communication, via the many different avenues available to stay in touch with our District and its employees. Contact information and telephone numbers are posted on the [Commack Website](#) and in our printed calendar. I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Dr. Donald James

Superintendent
Commack Schools

djames@commackschools.org

WHAT'S HAPPENING!

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS

Meetings are Simulcast on the Commack Website

Thursday, November 9, 2017 - 8:00 p.m.*

Thursday, December 14, 2017 - 8:00 p.m.*

Hubbs Administrative Center

*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.

Community Blood Drive

November 14, 2017

1:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. at Burr

Sponsored by PTA Council & NY Blood Center

SEPTA Holiday Boutique

November 16, 2017

6:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

at Commack High School
Raffles, Vendors Galore!

Thanksgiving Recess

November 23 & 24, 2017



Click the Community Events link on the
Commack Website for more events
www.commackschools.org

Follow us on Twitter
[@Commack Schools](https://twitter.com/CommackSchools)

Emergency Management Drill

Wednesday, November 22, 2017
Students will be dismissed 15 minutes early.

Commack High School Homecoming



Commack High School's Homecoming celebration on September 23 was awesome! With summer still in the air, the stands were filled to capacity with students, parents, and community members who came to support the home team. The Varsity Cougar Football Team responded with a 25-6 victory over Brentwood.

What better way to start the festivities than with a parade, led by our Commack Cougarettes, Kickline, and Cheerleaders, accompanied by our Marching Band. The Homecoming Court arrived in fashionable style atop convertibles, and the freshman, sophomores, juniors, and seniors proudly displayed their class banners, which were later judged and the winner announced during halftime (seniors won). The theme this year was TV shows, with Spiderman, Survivor, Friends, and the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles represented. Commack's youngest athletes, honor societies, and clubs also paraded up Townline Road to the High School. Many thanks to the SCPD for keeping us all safe during the parade and always.

Alumni of Distinction honored this year included Commack gradu-



ates John W. Barry, Deputy Police Commissioner in Suffolk County, Dr. Scott Leibowitz, and Jeanne Martin. CHS Principal Leslie Boritz said, "It is with great pride that we induct you, with gratitude for all that you have done for Commack and for society, and we honor you as models for all learners."

Parents of senior students in the Marching Band and Cougarettes received a special recognition, and the senior football players also presented flowers to each varsity cheerleader to thank them for their support, spirit, and encouragement over the years.

The halftime show's theme was "Party in the USA," with our acrobatic cheerleaders wowing the crowd, and our Cougarettes and Marching Band commanding the field with a spectacular musical and dance performance. The crowning of the homecoming king and queen, seniors DonoVaughn and Lauren, was the traditional ending to the halftime festivities, and the day ended on a high note with the football team's big win. Many thanks to our teachers, staff, students, and parents for helping to make this such a memorable event.



Indian Hollow Primary School's students and staff gathered for their annual photo on a beautiful September morning. After a bit of rearranging, the result was one big smiling emoji made up of hundreds of little happy faces.

Principal Brian Simpson looks forward to hanging the image alongside others from past years. "It's a bit of a challenge to pick a new outline each year," he said, "but it's a lot of fun." Past images have included a peace sign, a flag, a paw, a "C" for Commack, and a "50" to mark Indian Hollow's 50th anniversary.

A Glimpse of Their Futures:

High School Students Go to Harvard

Thirteen Commack High School science students were chosen to spend a weekend attending the prestigious Harvard Science Research Conference earlier this month. Our students heard keynote addresses from esteemed Harvard professors and researchers at the forefront of their fields, who shared their research in the areas of life and physical sciences. The students attended small-group workshops led by teaching staff, researchers, and Harvard students that focused on skills that can be utilized in all academic disciplines. Harvard students

also mentored our student on important skills such as resume writing, public speaking, how to further their science education through research, and guided them on the college selection and application process.

"It is an amazing opportunity for our students to participate in this enriching and exciting weekend in one of the premier institutions in our country," stated Director of Science Alison Offerman-Celentano.

In photo at Harvard, back row, from left to right: Raphael, Metaab Sawhney (CHS Alumni, MIT), Emma, Mariam, Ethan,



and Faizali. In the front row: Maheen, Kathy, Louis, Elizabeth, Mi-Kayla, Emily, Amy, and Marina.

Multiple Benefits: Teaming Up With the Northport VA Hospital

After spending the better half of last year learning the ins and outs of gardening under the tutelage of Commack High School science teacher, Ryan McGrath, students in the Work-Based Learning Program saw the fruits of their labors with an abundance of vegetables that they grew in the CHS garden and greenhouse.

With vegetables such as corn, yellow squash, string beans, tomatoes, and kale, the students in the program, guided by teachers Daryle Eisner and Casey Farrell spent the summer selling the produce at

the Farmers Market at the Northport VA.

In addition to learning the start-up and maintenance of gardening, the students utilized their skills interacting with customers, researching price points of their goods, setting up a vegetable stand, making sales, making change, and logging inventory. The program was a huge success. All money generated from the sale of the CHS vegetable stand at the Northport VA Hospital will be used to further fund the Work Based Learning program at Commack High School.



Interim Executive Director Appointed

The Commack School District welcomes Nicholas Amato, Jr., as the Interim Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction. As you may recall, the Board of Education approved the reconfiguration of the central office administration and instructional support team during the budget-development process. This was done in an effort to lend additional support to all curricular areas in the District. In the meantime, as we search for an appropriate candidate for the position of Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction created when we eliminated the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction position, Mr. Amato will fulfill the duties associated with that position.

Mr. Amato will support the work of the Curriculum, Instruction, and Student Support Services team. Scheduling, home instruction, compliance issues, and professional development protocols are some of



the areas to which Mr. Amato will lend his expertise. Mr. Amato began his career as a teacher, and he has served as a consultant to more than fifteen school districts and universities across Long Island. He has coordinated career/vocational and special education programs, and developed college admissions programs for

high schools and colleges. His expertise and in-depth experience in program oversight, college admissions, and supervision enhances Commack's already outstanding administrative team.

Mr. Amato is a graduate of the State University of New York at Buffalo, and earned his Masters and Professional Degrees from C.W. Post College of Long Island University. He is the recipient of the Distinguished Performance in Educational Administration and Leadership, and served as the President of the Suffolk County Guidance Directors Association.

"Commack will reap the benefits of Mr. Amato's many years of educational involvement," said Dr. Donald James, Superintendent of Commack Schools. "We are very happy to have Nick back with us, and anticipate his contributions will help lead to even greater success for our students and staff."



First graders in Mrs. Carillo's class at Rolling Hills signed their own "Classroom Constitution" and discussed what it means to be good citizens. They learned about the symbols of our country and why we have rules and laws.

Commack Constitution Day Celebrations



North Ridge Primary School celebrated Constitution Day with the wearing of the red, white, and blue by students and faculty. The entire school joined together in the Pledge of Allegiance and sang patriotic songs at the first 'Town Meeting' of the year.



Mrs. Clark's first grade class at Wood Park.



Lynne Stekete's kindergarten class Indian Hollow.

Burr Collects 4,000 Books to Spread the Joy of Literacy

The Burr Intermediate School Reading Challenge Club recently encouraged Burr students to donate gently used books to the Book Fairies, a Long Island based non-profit organization created by Amy Zaslansky. Donations of new and gently used books are distributed to libraries, schools, and organizations throughout metropolitan New York that do not have the funds to foster the love of reading for their children.

"If a child says I don't like to read it's because they haven't found the

right book," Zaslansky said. "I think that people don't realize how important reading is and being able to read, how that is able to change your life."

Brownie Troop 1448 volunteered after school with the PTA Burr Reading Challenge Committee to sort the books by age level and packed approximately 4,000 books for this amazing organization. This drive reflected a true community effort, including our Burr students, families, PTA and Commack Brownie Troop 1448 (in photo).



Sawmill's Monster Match

When students are looking for hands-on fun projects, you can always count on Sawmill Intermediate School enrichment teacher Lindsey Persichilli. This month she teamed up with four teachers, their classes, and two other elementary school classes in upstate New York for a long-distance collaborative project.

The "Monster Match" is designed to enhance students' communication skills. Sawmill students built a life-sized monster (see photo), and wrote detailed assembly directions that were sent to their partner

classes. Their partners, following the instructions, tried to recreate the monster. Barbara Kory-Barry and Alison Clinard's classes worked together with a class at Hastings-Mallory Elementary School in Central Square, NY. Lisa Jacobson and Beth Considine's classes blended to build a monster and were matched with Palermo Elementary School in Fulton NY.

The matched classes finally met face to face when they video-conferenced with each other to compare monsters. A perfect project around Halloween time!



North Ridge Garden Ribbon Cutting



The children at North Ridge will be planting and sowing come spring in their brand new organic garden. Former North Ridge student Frank, now a junior at the High School, built the beds, complete with removable fencing for easy access, as his Eagle Scout Project. There is also a

composter (in the center) to recycle organic matter into nutrient-rich soil.

In the photo from the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Superintendent Donald James, North Ridge Principal Katherine Rihm, and Assistant Superintendent Amy Ryan thank Frank for his hard work and accomplishment.

One School, Many Cultures



English as a New Language (ENL) teacher Jennifer Barricelle and her students at Rolling Hills Primary School helped to decorate the "One School, Many Cultures" bulletin board. Students embellished a hand-made "passport" with the flag of their family's homeland.

Long Island's "Best of the Best"

CHS Senior, Adam, was named a Long Island Scholar-Artist, and received an Award of Merit from the Long Island Arts Alliance. Judged to be one of the "best of the best," Adam, an IB student, excels academically and has performed "in every Commack High School theatrical show since his sophomore year, when he played the lead in the musical *Sweeney Todd*," said his teacher, Karen Malone.

In photo, Adam with Hon. Regents Roger Tilles, who is on the committee.



COUGAR POWER!!!

COMMACK DOMINATES FALL SEASON



Cross Country



Soccer



Volleyball

What a season! ... and it's still not over, as our League Champion Boys Golf and Soccer teams, and our League Champion Girls Cross Country, Soccer, Swim/Diving, and Volleyball teams head to the playoffs!

The Girls Volleyball team had an undefeated season and took the League 1 title for the first time in 21 years. It's the third year in a row that the Girls Soccer team earned the

title, and Girls Cross Country took their first league title in school history.

Our Boys Soccer Team won the League 1 title, their first in seven years, and Boys Golf took the League 2 title with an 8-2 record.

If that wasn't great enough, many of our Commack Girls Varsity Swim/Dive team members qualified for the State Champion-

ships. Three of our Cougar Girls Varsity Tennis players took Division titles, and Julia and Emma Matz competed in the NYS Tennis Championships.

The Boys JV Golf team enjoyed a perfect 13-0 season, and won 40 matches with one loss in the last three years.

Super! Follow our teams on Twitter @commackschools. #GoCougars!!!!

First Day of School



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.



Commack Board of Education:
Steven Hartman - President
Jarrett Behar - Vice President
Trustees: Jennifer Carpenter,
William Hender, Pamela Verity

Superintendent of Schools:
Dr. Donald A. James