



Commack Courier

A BOARD OF EDUCATION PUBLICATION

Mental Health in Focus in 2022

There is no doubt that after the last two years, mental health advocacy is critically important. It's too easy to get bogged down in bad news and overwhelmed by life's challenges. Thankfully, the Commack Legislative Advocacy Committee—a committee comprising the Superintendent, Board of Education members, Commack residents, high school students, and staff—is marshalling its efforts in the new year to focus on mental health support and school funding platforms. The Legislative Advocacy Committee (LAC) is also assessing the impact of existing and proposed state and federal education.

The LAC was established to assist the Board of Education in implementing solutions regarding legislative matters. The committee is charged with effectively communicating Commack's needs to our local, state, and federal elected representatives. In the



future, the LAC hopes to travel to Albany for in-person meetings with our legislative representatives, as done in pre-pandemic years. LAC members met with Senator Mario Mattera (photo) in November, and with Assemblyman Keith Brown in January, to discuss the critical needs for mental health support programs and the importance of funding additional K-12 programs and safety nets. It is our sincere hope that these discussions will lead to positive developments in the future that will bolster our mental health initiatives and programs districtwide.

Commack Wins Big at the Harvard Science Research Conference Innovation Challenge

The annual Harvard Science Research Conference (HSRC) is a two-day conference hosted by Harvard University for exceptional high school students. Consisting of a series of speakers, workshops, and mentoring sessions designed to encourage and promote interest in the natural sciences as well as research, the HSRC is truly an event for the best and brightest. Commack students who were selected to participate include Lakxshanna R., Flora L., Zeynep T., Alisha K., Juliette A., Mehek S., Manya K., Farah R., Ishana C., and Jin K.

A highlight of this year's event, which was held virtually, was the Innovation Challenge. Our students made us proud once again by winning two competitions in the challenge. Congratulations to Ishana C., Manya K., and Mehek S. for their winning project *Cryogenic Heart Preservation*, and congratulations to Zeynep T. for the other winning project, titled *Using Machine Learning for Schizophrenia Episodes*. Winners



The winning team and their advisors! (L-R) Dr. Kramer, Ms. Beatty, Zeynep, Mehek, Manya, Ms. Suttie, Ishana, Principal Ms. Lipenholtz, Science Director Ms. Johanson, and Ms. Collette.

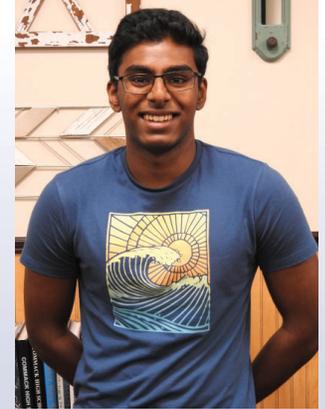
will have their submissions published on the Harvard College Undergraduate Research Association (HCURA) website, and all winners will receive certificates of recognition.

Congratulations are in order for all of these young scientists, as well as their research mentors and teachers: Jeanette Collette, Dr. Daniel Kramer, Jeanne Suttie, Robert Smullen, and Andrea Beatty.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARS

Hearty congratulations to seniors Karen L. and Harry P., Commack High School students, who were chosen as semifinalists in the prestigious National Merit competition. Their accomplishment truly makes all of us in the District proud, and is a tremendous testament to their discipline, drive, and intelligence. Congratulations, Karen and Harry!

These two academically talented high school seniors will go on to compete for finalist status and the chance to win one of 7,600 National Merit Scholarships. Winners will be announced in the spring of 2022.



TALENTED STUDENT SCIENTIST AT COMMACK NAMED REGENERON STS SCHOLAR



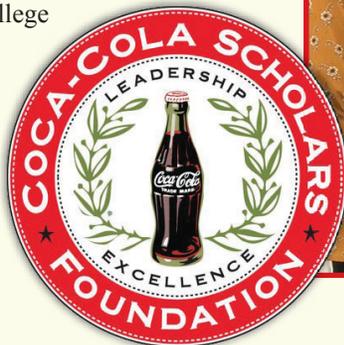
Congratulations to Commack senior Soyoun "Ashley" M., who was named a Regeneron STS Scholar for her Animal Science project, *Exploring Sexual Dimorphism and Sex Hormone Receptor Expression in the bed nucleus of the stria terminalis (BNST) in the Monogamous Prairie Vole*, which she investigated at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory.

Ashley's dedication to science is demonstrated by her enrollment in two different science research classes and her Academic Leadership status in a rigorous IB Diploma curriculum. She is also active in the community, is a varsity athlete, and is editor of the school newspaper. Ashley plans to continue her interest in environmental science in college. Well done, Ashley!

CHS SENIORS ARE COCA-COLA SCHOLAR SEMIFINALISTS

We'd also like to spotlight Commack High School seniors Melody L. and Laxshanna (Lexie) R. Melody and Lexie were recently selected as semifinalists in the national 2021-2022 Coca-Cola Scholars Program, which recognizes students who show an outstanding commitment to leadership, academic achievements, and dedication to their community. Melody and Lexie are in the running for one of 150 college scholarships worth \$20,000.

Only 1,617 semifinalists were chosen among more than 68,000 applicants this year. Winners will be announced in March 2022. Good luck and congratulations.



Director of Guidance Nicole Kregler, Principal Carrie Lipenholtz, Melody, and Guidance Counselor Ann Iacopelli.

Burr Finishes Second in NY Stock Market Game

The members of Burr Intermediate School really know how to play the market! The fifth graders in Mrs. Coppolino's class that comprised team four—Anthony C., Armin A., and Luke C.—earned nearly \$9,000 in just ten weeks. At that rate, their annual return on investment was nearly 50 percent!

The Burr Stock Market Club started over 20 years ago as part of a local competition sponsored by the SIFMA Foundation. Fifth graders compete with students throughout New York. The game is so effective because it uses a computer simulation that mirrors the activity of the New York Stock Exchange. Here's how it works: Each competing team receives \$100,000 of play money to invest in the market the same way traders at the NYSE would. An internet-based program enables each team to make purchases and sales of stock to build profitable portfolios. The transactions are then compared to closing prices for each stock purchased or sold. Congratulations to our Burr fifth graders for their tremendous performance in the game. This result certainly hints at big things for all these students in the future!



Over the Holidays, Seventh Graders at CMS Give Back to Veterans



Students at Commack Middle School know the importance of giving back during the holiday season. This year, seventh graders at CMS participated in a service project aimed at helping local veterans. The students donated over \$2,500 in supermarket gift cards to the Hero Hunger Help Project, a 15-year-old program that helps veterans combat food insecurity. The Northport Veterans Association then distributed the gift cards to veterans receiving support services and other veterans who truly needed them. Team representatives Mrs. Eliopoulos, Mrs. McFadden, and Mrs. Mankes also had their seventh graders create thank you cards to send to the veterans, showing their gratitude for their service to our country.

These young students are truly a model for all of us to look up to, because by working together, they made a real difference in the lives of veterans in need.

Sawmill Sails to the Skies!

Here's a project sure to make adventurous adults everywhere a little jealous they aren't still in school. In a recent fifth-grade enrichment class at Sawmill Intermediate School, students created their own hot air balloons. These balloons weren't just pretty models; they really worked!

Using a combination of tissue paper and a gore pattern, the students sewed together the circular structure using glue sticks. They then studied the physics of hot air balloons to garner an understanding of how they work and how to operate them. Finally, they were ready for the big launch.

After a brief test run in the auditorium, the hot air balloons were set sailing outside using the outdoor launcher. Everyone watched as their homemade creations took flight, proud in the hard work and skill that went into making the launch possible. Well done, Sawmill!



MUSIC AND ART

Commack Sophomore Wins First Place in Statewide Art Contest

Take a look at this incredible artwork by sophomore Alyssa Pascale! Alyssa won first place in this year's annual math poster contest for her powerful representation of the contest's theme, *Building Mathematical Minds For The Future*. The contest was sponsored by the Association of Mathematics Teachers of New York State, and Alyssa's work was displayed on the association's website in November. In photo with Alyssa is CHS math teacher Christina Pawlowski.



THE SPORTS BULLETIN

CHS's Denise Phelan Highlights an Incredible Season for the Northport-Commack Swim Team!

It was a banner season for the swim team at Commack and Northport high schools. Not only did the Northport-Commack varsity swim team finish an impressive seventh place out of 85 schools (fifth among public schools) at the New York State Championships, but the team also set a new Section XI record and won the 200-meter medley relay race. Not too bad!

A particular highlight of the season was the performance of Commack's Denise Phelan. At the State Championships, she won the state title in the 200 individual medley with an All-American Honors time of 1:59.95, the second girl to break two minutes in New York history. (Olympian Julia Smit was the only other girl to do this.) She also lowered her own county record on the 100-meter breaststroke to 1:00.86. For her incredible performance, Denise was named Most Valuable Swimmer by officials.

Congratulations as well to all the girls on the 200-meter medley team (Caitlyn, Denise, Makenna, and Lia) and everyone who competed at the New York State Championships.



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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