

Celebrating 30 Years!



Thirty years ago the Commack Schools underwent a major organizational change and our current grade and school structure began, with four primary schools with grades kindergarten, first and second, two intermediate schools housing grades three through five, one middle school with grades 6-8 and one high school with grades 9-12.

Incorporated in 1899, the Commack Union Free School District began with two small schools. The population grew steadily until 1972, when there were 15,000 students and 21 schools! As the years went by, the end of the Vietnam War led to the end of the thriving defense industry on Long Island, inflation and unemployment. Schools closed and by 1986, with enrollment around 6,000 students, the "neighborhood school" model

of grades K-6 was too expensive and no longer sustainable. After much debate and many meetings, our current school and grade-level configurations began in 1988 with full-day kindergarten, smaller class sizes, and science and computer labs in each setting.

This is a very brief summary of the rich history of the Commack School District. We celebrate the decisions of previous Board of Education, administrators, and community members who had the foresight to set the stage for the success of our schools and most importantly, of our students.

For a complete history of the Commack School District, read "[Commack...a beautiful place.](#)" published by the District in 1999 for the 100 year anniversary.

NATIONAL MERIT SEMIFINALISTS



We're happy to announce that six Commack High School seniors were named National Merit Semifinalists. The nationwide pool of Semifinalists represents less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors and includes the highest-scoring students who took the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®). The PSAT serves as the initial screening of program entrants in each state.

Congratulations to Kathy, Gabriel, Joshua, Delina, Deniz, and Kyle. These academically talented high school seniors have an opportunity to com-

pete for one of 7,500 National Merit Scholarships. Winners will be announced in the spring and will share in scholarships totaling more than \$31 million.

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 the photo with the Semifinalists are: proud Principal Leslie Boritz (left), Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction Jordan Cox and Director of Guidance Nicole Kregler.

School's Open - Drive Carefully!

Board of Ed Corner

Dear Commack Community Members,

On behalf of the Commack Board of Education I would like to welcome everyone back to the 2018-19 school year. Your Board has been working with the Superintendent during the summer to update our goals for this upcoming school year. We have been focused in four primary areas:

- Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
- Public Relations, Communication and Advocacy
- District Business and Operations
- Policy Updates

During our October Board of Education meeting, we reviewed all of these goals as a board and adopted them. These goals allow the superintendent and his administrative team to put forth the procedures to enact these goals. During the upcoming months at our Board of Education

meetings will have detailed presentations regarding the State of District. These presentations provide the community and the Board with further in-depth details about how our school district operates.

The Board of Education always welcomes feedback from our community. Your best method of communication is to email us at boe@commack.k12.ny.us. Individual Board members' email addresses are listed on the Board of Education page on the District website: www.commackschools.org/BoardofEducation.aspx.

The community is encouraged to attend our meetings, which are also simulcast. The videos and presentations are also posted on the website.

We look forward to a great school year!

Thank you,

Steve Hartman
BOE President

BOARD OF EDUCATION APPRECIATION - THANK YOU!



Board of Education Appreciation Night honors our dedicated volunteer Board members, who attend endless events and meetings and 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, advocate with elected officials, and approve expenditures.

At the October 11, 2018 meeting, the focus was on the love of literature. Students from every grade level and school

personally thanked the Board for providing them with the access to every type of literature, from picture books to the classics. They thanked the Board for hiring teachers who nurture the love of reading, and the many hours of enjoyment books provide. You can view the video of these lovely tributes and evening, posted on the Commack Website.

Thank you to our Board of Education team: President Steven Hartman, Vice President Jarrett Behar, and trustees Jennifer Carpenter, and William Hender.

National Merit Commended Students



Seventeen Commack High School seniors were named "Commended Students" in the 2019 National Merit® Scholarship Program. Commended students placed among the top 50,000 scorers of the more than 1.6 million students who entered the competi-

tion. Based on PSAT test scores, these scholastically talented seniors are recognized for their exceptional academic promise.

Congratulations to: Karen, Miles, Kristen, Emily, Ryan, Brian, Eliana, Jared, Angela, Hamza, Catherine, Re-

ece, Joon, Taylor, Emma, Danielle, and Carly.

In the photo with the Semifinalists are: proud Principal Leslie Boritz (left), Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction Jordan Cox and Director of Guidance Nicole Kregler.

Superintendent's Message

Our schools are back in full swing and the calendar is packed with special events every day. Classrooms are buzzing as children prepare for the seasonal celebrations and learn about the history of our proud nation on Constitution Day, Veteran's Day, and Thanksgiving.

This year, our focus continues to be on providing an exceptional, developmentally appropriate, academic program at all levels; a program designed to prepare all students for their future. We are also working on new ways to communicate with our parents and community, including a new communications app coming soon. Our new Teacher Websites contain valuable information for students and parents, so please use this tool to keep current on what's happening in each classroom.

As more and more is done with our "smart" phones, we are constantly searching for new ways to let you know what's happening in our schools. Please stay tuned for information about our new "smart" phone app!

Stay in touch! Fall is upon us so please make sure your contact information is up to date; parents, please check the Parent Portal; community members can opt in to our Commu-



Dr. James and BOE President Steven Hartman at Commack's 9-11 Memorial after the Night of Remembrance Ceremony.

nity Connect Email Notification; and if you would like to contact us, contact information and telephone numbers are posted on the Commack Website and in our printed calendar.

As always, thank you for your support of our schools and enjoy the beautiful fall weather and all the season has to offer!

Sincerely,

Dr. Donald James

Superintendent
Commack Schools

djames@commackschools.org

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 first event is a presentation of "You Can't Take it With You," a musical on Thursday, November 1, 2018 at 1 p.m. at Commack High School. 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 of-

fer 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.

Our musical will take place on March 14, 2019. Mark your calendars to attend the Senior Citizens' Dinner Dance with live music on May 3, 2019.

Please be reminded that you are also invited to use your Gold Card to attend student athletic contests and student and faculty concerts.

WHAT'S HAPPENING!

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS

Meetings are Simulcast on the Commack Website

Thursday, November 8, 2018 - 8:00 p.m.*

Thursday, December 13, 2018 - 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 13, 2018

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

Sponsored by PTA Council & NY Blood Center

SEPTA Holiday Boutique

November 14, 2018

6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

at Commack High School
Raffles, Vendors Galore!

Emergency Management Drill

Wednesday, November 21, 2018

All Students will be dismissed 15 minutes early

Thanksgiving Recess

November 22 & 23, 2018



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

Follow us on Twitter: @Commack Schools
and on Instagram: @CommackSD

Make Your Mark!

Our primary schools celebrated International Dot Week in September, joining schools around the world in celebrating each other's differences and finding out what makes each one of us special. Children were encouraged to "Make Your Mark" in the world.

Based on the book, The Dot, by Peter Reynolds, a wonderful children's picture book, the week was filled with creative dot-related experiences that included song, art, assemblies, and reading.

At Wood Park Primary School, there were dots everywhere!

Children learned the Dot song in music class, read The Dot book, created dot masterpieces in art class, and used a Kid Pix program to create their own unique dots. The entire school gathered in the gym to culminate their week of interdisciplinary fun. Led by music teacher Mrs. Klug, everyone sang the Dot song and got the chance to admire the imaginative artwork displayed in the gym. Principal Michelle Collision remarked, "Our students had the opportunity to share their art work and celebrate all of our unique and special differences."



Wood Park



Indian Hollow



North Ridge



Rolling Hills



Wood Park

The Golden Spatula Award - Cooking Up Some Fun Incentives!



Sawmill Intermediate School is extremely excited about the new Golden Spatula Award! The Golden Spatula award is a positive behavior incentive program for students. During lunch each class can earn a point for displaying Respect, Responsibility, and Safety in the cafeteria. The class with the most points on Friday afternoon wins the Golden Spatula Award.

At the end of each month

the class that receives the most Golden Spatula Awards will WIN a game for the classroom or an extra recess period.

Sawmill has also kicked off a Recess First Initiative, where students play outside for recreation for first part of lunch and eat lunch after recess. The Golden Spatula Award and our Recess First Initiative are just some of the great things happening at Sawmill!

Commack Middle School Initiative: It's About Respect, Responsibility, & Relationships

At the second annual CMS Kick-Off on September 21, students at Commack Middle School had the opportunity to participate in activities and instructional opportunities that focused on the values of Respect, Responsibility, and Relationships. Students engaged in these activities throughout the school day with their classmates and teachers. Some of the activities included:

Respect: Our teachers encouraged their eighth grade students to write messages to our servicemen and women or to elderly members of the wider community. This thoughtful activity helped our students learn about respecting members of a global community as well as the need to acknowledge and/or thank others.

Responsibility: Our teachers facilitated a meaningful ac-

tivity on the role of up standers with their seventh grade students. Using a meaningful video as a prompt for a class discussion, our students learned that it is their responsibility to stand up to observed bullying behavior.

Relationships: Our sixth grade students participated in an activity designed to encourage communication with one another. A simple circle of students and ball of yarn acted as a catalyst to plant seeds for growing new friendships.

Assistant Principal Carrie Lipenholtz acknowledges, "The energy and positive spirit at our kickoff was felt by all who participated. I am hopeful that the activities that the students engaged in set an enriching and supportive tone for our school year as we continue to strive to create a culture built on mutual respect and responsibility."



The activity above was called "Get out of the knot." Students worked together as a team to undo the human knot without releasing their hands.



The school mascot greeted the students as they entered that morning.

Adding It All Up at Rolling Hills!



First grade students are busy learning addition in a creative way! Mrs. Carillo's class used "craftivity" to make Pumpkin Pal Number Bonds, using large dominoes to create the part, part, whole numbers on the face of their pumpkins.

Learning addition and subtraction through part, part, whole thinking refers to how numbers can be split into parts so students can see the relationship between a number and its component parts. These first graders are ready for fall and sharpening their math skills!



North Ridge Reflects the American Spirit



The students and staff at North Ridge celebrated Constitution Day and Citizenship Day. The entire school came together as one community for the first town meeting of the 2018/19 school year. In recognition of this day everyone dressed in patriotic colors and sang patriotic songs.



Good citizenship is an important trait to learn, and the school is also launching a new incentive program called Spirit Monkey. Stay tuned for more about it in the next issue!

Going Pink for a Cure



This year's whole-school photo at Indian Hollow Primary School was a giant pink ribbon, in support of Breast Cancer Awareness month. Staff and students alike wore bright pink T-shirts that were sold to raise money for the American Cancer Society. The image on each shirt was designed by teacher Joellyn Tuohy and pictures "Mack," the Indian Hollow's mascot, and the words "Indian Hollow Cares" on a ribbon. The school raised over \$900.



Pictured above is Mrs. Tacca's second grade class, who created inspirational cards for an organization called Send A Smile Today during art class with Mrs. Cellana. Sendasmiletoday.org sends out cards to cancer patients letting them know they are never alone from time of diagnosis - through treatment - to survivorship. The children are learning about the importance of expressing compassion, support, and caring to their community members. Way to go #IndianHollow!

Commack's Scholar-Artist



High School senior, Lydia, is one of 20 students to receive the 2018-19 Scholar-Artist award from the Long Island Arts Alliance.

Lydia was honored evening at an awards ceremony at C.W. Post Tilles Center, along with the other winners from Long Island. The LIAA Scholar-Artists will be featured monthly in **Newsday** during the year.

IB Theatre teacher Karen Malone said, "As a special honor, Lydia was the only winner asked to sing during the ceremony to a packed audience, including Regents Tilles. We are very proud of her!"

In photo with Lydia (center) are Mrs. Malone and Charles Schulz, Coordinator of English.

Honesty



The first grade students in Mrs. Fox and Mrs. Waldman's classes at Indian Hollow meet monthly to learn about good character. September's trait was honesty. The students watched a video and discussed how the characters could have shown truthfulness when they broke a lamp. Students worked with partners to reflect about times when they demonstrated honesty and illustrated their ideas for the honesty bulletin board.

Playing Around



Children at Rolling Hills and Sawmill are enjoying their new playground! The District also added new equipment at Indian Hollow.



High School Students Partner for the Future

The Partners for the Future Program at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory (CSHL) provides an opportunity for talented Long Island high school students to have hands-on experience in biomedical research. Students learn firsthand what it takes to do cutting edge research in these state-of-the-art facilities and understand what it is like to work in a lab.

The Commack High School Science Research team nominated Gabe, Pragati, and Deniz for the program. Students were required to submit an essay and potential candidates were interviewed. This year, Commack was the only school where all three candidates were selected into the program. In the program, students are required to spend a minimum of 10 hours per week during September through March of their senior year doing original research under the watchful eye of their scientist mentor.

Gabe's project involves an analysis of a region of the brain called the Frontal Eye Field (FEF). He is using models and computer programs to understand how brain waves propagate in the FEF and how they contribute to visual perception.

Deniz's project is on Replication Protein A1(rpa1) and its interaction alongside Dicer, an enzyme that plays a role in RNA interference. This is relevant because when harmful double-strand breaks occur in DNA, rpa1 and Dicer have been found to be part of the DNA damage repair process. This research intends to reveal if the presence of rpa1 depends on the presence of Dicer for this process.

Pragati 's project focuses on creating a new and more effective computational workflow using RNA-seq expression profiling data to determine functionally significant candidate genes that could be used to improve crop production.

Burr Kicks for a Cause



The Physical Education department at Burr Intermediate School recently sponsored its annual Kick for a Cause soccer tournament. Over 200 students participated in this three-day event which raised over \$2,000. Students came in before school to participate in the games.

The money raised will be donated to support the work of the ALS Foundation and Colin's Joy Project.

We greatly appreciate the generosity of the Burr students and their parents. This community service activity was a great way to "kick off" the school year.

First Day Photos



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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 Courier

www.commackschools.org

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

Superintendent of Schools:
Dr. Donald A. James