

ONTEORA

Summer 2017

ONTEORA WELCOMES VICTORIA McLAREN AS SUPERINTENDENT



Onteora welcomes Victoria McLaren (above) as its new Superintendent of Schools. Ms. McLaren, who previously served as the District's Assistant Superintendent for Business, assumed her new position on July 1.

The Board of Education voted unanimously to approve the hiring of Ms. McLaren at its May 16 meeting. She replaces Bruce Watson, who resigned for personal reasons.

Ms. McLaren, who had worked in the District's Business Office since November 2004, is no stranger to the responsibilities of the Superintendent's job. She stepped in during Onteora's previous Superintendent search, serving as Interim Superintendent from March 2015-August 2016.

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Bon Voyage, Class of 2017!

ONTEORA HIGH SCHOOL'S CLASS OF 2017 marched into a festively decorated gymnasium on June 23, celebrating the end of their High School careers and the beginning of the next chapters of their educational journeys.

Due to threatening weather, the ceremony had been moved indoors, but the change in locale did nothing to dispel the sense of celebration and excitement, as family members, friends, alumni, and staff members cheered the accomplishments of the 99 graduates.

Principal Lance Edelman welcomed the crowd, thanking the community for its generous support—including the approximately \$170,000 in scholarship money donated to this year's graduating seniors.

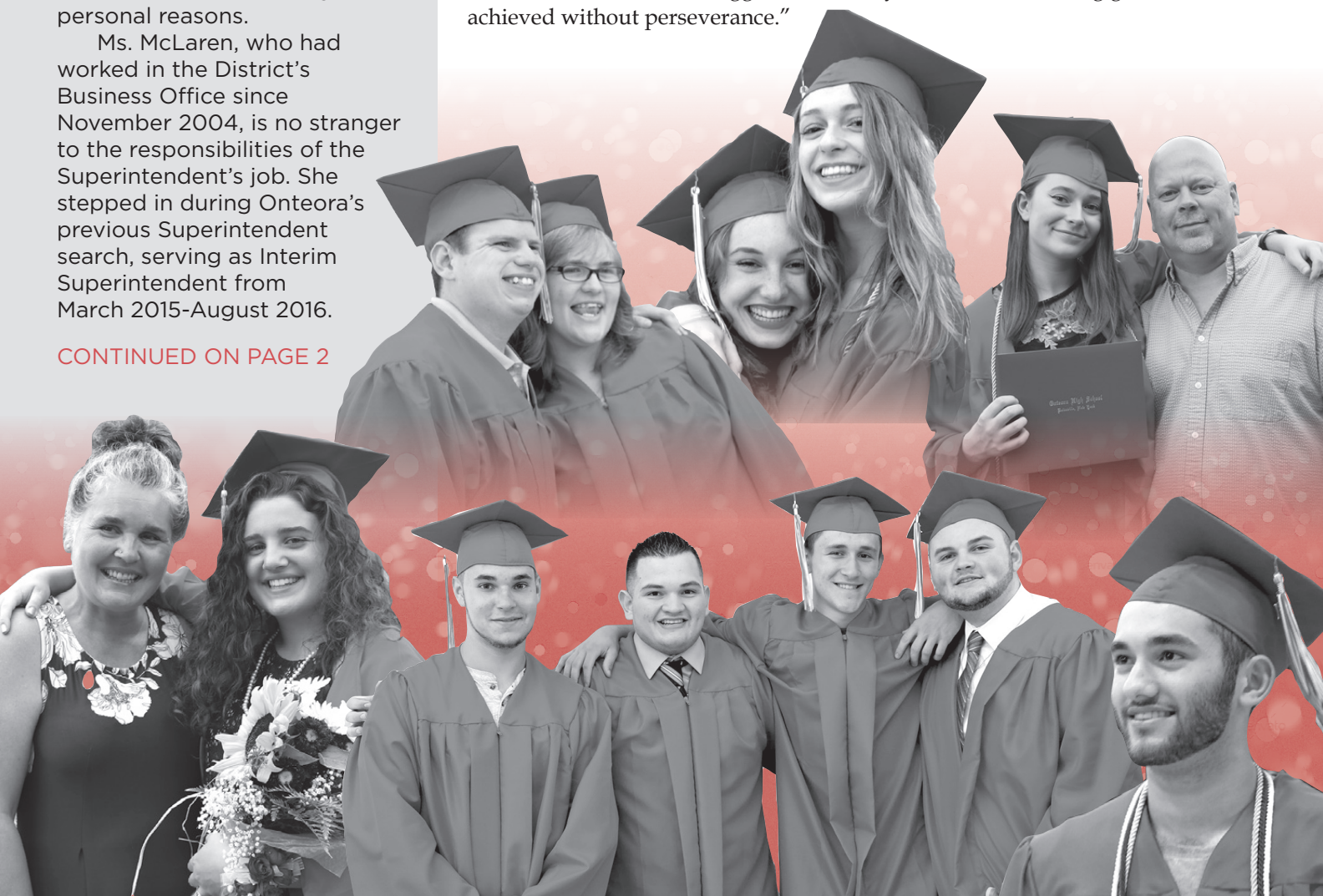
Highlights of the program included inspiring speeches by Salutatorian Sophie Heckelman, Valedictorian Jacqueline Katz, Class President Autumn Ward, and Ward Todd, President of the Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce, who delivered the commencement address.

"What we have learned in school, while valuable, is only the beginning," Autumn told her fellow students, noting that each member of the graduating class was "headed down a different path."

"Success," Autumn continued, "is not something you can frame on the wall" Perseverance, she suggested, was key to success. "Nothing great is ever achieved without perseverance."



Diplomas in hand, Christopher Riedinger, Kyle Fisher, and John VanBaaren (from left to right) pose for a photo.



Woodstock Grade 3 Graduates Celebrate New Beginnings

SUMMER STARTED A BIT EARLY AT WOODSTOCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, where Grade 3 students said “aloha” to their school during a luau-themed moving up ceremony on June 13. The auditorium, which was decked out with beach balls and tropical decorations, was packed with proud parents, friends, and family members.

Before the students received their applause, handshakes, and certificates, Principal Scott Richards addressed the crowd. “I’ve had the pleasure of working with your children for the past three years,” he said. “I’m very proud of their growth—academically, socially, and emotionally. This is a group that is going to be missed!”



Woodstock students (from left to right) Ramona Brueckner, Isaiah Boundy Winnick Rosenstein, Aleena Bonesteel, and Brianna O’Brien share a quiet moment before their end-of-year celebration.



Fiona Green poses for a portrait prior to her moving up ceremony.



Woodstock’s Grade 3 students marked their upcoming transition to Bennett School with a luau-themed moving up ceremony.

Stepping Up to Kindergarten!

ONTEORA’S PRE-K STUDENTS ARE READY FOR KINDERGARTEN!

Pictured below are children who “graduated” from Onteora’s Universal Pre-K program and First Steps Preschool. Among the graduates was Charli Goodsight (right), who is shown with teacher Cathy Johnan. Beginnings Preschool also held a stepping up ceremony for its Onteora Pre-K grads. Good luck to all our incoming Kindergartners!



ONTEORA WELCOMES VICTORIA McLAREN AS SUPERINTENDENT

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Ms. McLaren is looking forward to meeting the challenges of her new post. “I am grateful for the confidence the Board has placed in me with this appointment, and I am very excited to transition into this role,” she said. “While serving as the Interim Superintendent, I found the position to be challenging and rewarding. I appreciate all of the wonderful aspects of Onteora, from our amazing students and talented and dedicated staff to our incredibly supportive community.”

Prior to joining Onteora, Ms. McLaren worked as the School Business Manager for the Webutuck Central School District and held various positions at IBM and a local bank.

She holds a BS in Business Economics from SUNY Oneonta, an MBA from Marist College, and a Certificate of Advanced Study in School Business Administration from SUNY New Paltz. Her certifications include School District Administrator and School Business Administrator.

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

DEAR ONTEORA COMMUNITY,

I am so excited and honored to be serving as your Superintendent, and I look forward to working with you for years to come. The years I have spent in the District have given me an appreciation for all of the wonderful aspects of Onteora. This District is rich in resources, and I am grateful for how our community supports and nurtures our students. I will be reaching out to our District's various constituent groups in the fall, and I look forward to meeting with everyone as I move forward in this new role.

I hope everyone is enjoying their summer with family and friends. Summer is the time to recharge and gear up for the coming school year. Here in our District offices and schools, we spend the summer months preparing for the return of the students and staff in September.

Many of our staff members are participating in summer professional development opportunities to support our students and to hone their professional skills. Some areas of focus include curriculum writing and revision at the High School level in Algebra, Geometry, Science Fiction, Mythology, and AP Human Geography. At the elementary level, teachers are participating in robotics training, Math Workshop training, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) activities, and literacy work supporting best strategies for reading in various content areas.

There are some exciting things happening around the District this summer, including the renovation of the Bennett playground. The playing field has been leveled and seeded, and the new play structures have been ordered. We will enlist the help of the community to install the structures in the fall. We found the community-build process to be fun and rewarding at the Phoenicia and Woodstock schools. The students of Bennett chose the equipment, so I'm certain they will enjoy using it.

We are also repairing some of the paving at the Woodstock Elementary School building and are installing a new scoreboard on our football field. We are all looking forward to the return of our Varsity Football program, and we hope the community will be attending the home games to cheer for our team. The first home game is scheduled for September 9, and Homecoming is scheduled for September 23.

I always look forward to the return of our students in September. They bring a palpable energy and excitement into the buildings. Our students continually impress me with their achievements, and I am certain that this year will be no exception.

Sincerely,

Victoria McLaren
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Phoenicia Students Look Ahead to Fourth Grade



Phoenicia Grade 3 teacher Jaclyn Sobolewski poses with students who will be attending fourth grade at Bennett School in the fall.

ON JUNE 16, 32 CHILDREN CELEBRATED their transitions from Phoenicia Elementary School to Bennett Elementary School, where they will begin Grade 4 in the fall. It was an occasion for looking back as well as looking ahead.

"This is a celebration of success for all our third grade students," Phoenicia Principal Linda Sella said in her opening remarks. "This is just the beginning for your kids and grandkids," she told the audience, which was packed with proud family members. "Without you, it just doesn't happen."

Addressing the students, she continued, "I want you to promise me that you will be the best you can be, and that you'll always have fun!"

The festivities kicked off with a lively performance of "Phoenicia is Dynamite," a song written by former Phoenicia student Anna Johnson. Next up was a video created under the supervision of Library Media Specialist Stephen Patschke. The video shared some of the year's highlights, including Phoenicia's silly, yet highly educational, observance of the 100th day of school, and the school's wildly successful "Spring into Spring" Reading Marathon.

After receiving certificates and T-shirts, the soon-to-be fourth graders proudly marched off the stage.



Phoenicia Grade 3 students (from left to right) Juliet Barry, Isabella Warren, and Alexa Hull are all smiles before their moving up ceremony, which took place on June 16.

WELCOME BACK!

The first day of school
for students will be
Wednesday, September 6.
Let the learning begin!



End-of-Year Ceremony Celebrates Bennett Students' Accomplishments

THE 89 STUDENTS IN BENNETT'S CLASS OF 2017 celebrated their successful completion of elementary school with a festive ceremony held on June 22. The newly minted seventh graders will be entering Middle School in the fall.

Highlights of the evening included an inspiring performance of "The Star-Spangled Banner" by students Madeline Feldman, Kaylin Martin, and Clare Voelker, as well as lively musical selections by the award-winning Bennett Jazz Ensemble.

Students were also recognized for their achievements in many areas, including academics, art, music, citizenship, service, and physical education. Among the awards were ones given in memory of former Bennett students Madison Creagan and Kevin O'Connor.

Speakers included Bennett Student Council President Takemi Sono-Knowles. "We've made a lot of memories at Bennett, and I know we'll make even more in Middle School and High School," he said. "We have accomplished so many things, and I know we will accomplish even more as the Class of 2023!"



Bennett's moving up ceremony was marked by hugs and high fives, music and lots of happy memories.

NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY INDUCTS NEW MEMBERS



ONTEORA HIGH SCHOOL celebrated the initiation of 19 students from the classes of 2018 and 2019 into the National Honor Society (NHS) during a moving candlelit ceremony held on June 7.

The newest members of the Onteora chapter of NHS are John Paul Abreu, Sara Chazik, Ryan Clark, Charles Coryell, Adrien D'Aprile, James Davis, Miles Eberhard, Grace Himberger, Benjamin Johansen, Elie Kuhne, Cecilia Maillet, Felicia Ojarovsky, Fenner Osmond-Friedman, Emilio Pardi, Pia Roels, Helen Schauffler, Jessica Sorbellini, Satch Sumner-Waldman, and Lindsay Voelker. Onteora's total NHS membership now stands at 31.

STUDENTS HONORED FOR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

TWENTY-SEVEN OF ULSTER COUNTY'S BEST AND BRIGHTEST STUDENTS were recognized for their academic achievements on June 7 at the third annual Scholastic Achievement Breakfast. Congratulations to (from left to right) Onteora High School Principal's Award recipient Gabrielle Raphael, Salutatorian Sophie Heckelman, Valedictorian Jacqueline Katz, and Ulster BOCES Career & Technical Center Principal's Award recipient Carlos Santiago (who was enrolled in the Criminal Justice program).



Goodbye Middle School, Hello High School!

ONTEORA MIDDLE SCHOOL'S CLASS OF 2017 celebrated their considerable achievements—and their upcoming journey to High School—during a bittersweet ceremony held on June 19.

One hundred and twenty-five Grade 8 students marched into the packed auditorium to the celebratory sounds of "Pomp and Circumstance," played by beloved music teacher Krista Cayea, who is also moving on this year. Ms. Cayea, who began working for Onteora in 1984, is embarking on her well-deserved retirement.

Highlights of the ceremony included a moving rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner" by Destinee Bernard, Alayna Fisher, Isabelle Helm, Alissa Kolarick, Steven Marin, Emily Peck, and Leon Savage. Among the many awards announced during the ceremony were three scholarships bestowed in memory of student Madison Creagan, who lost her life in a car accident last summer. Two scholarships were given by

the National Junior Honor Society, and one by the field hockey team.

Before receiving their certificates, the students heard some inspiring words from their principal, Jennifer O'Connor. "Remember to be kind, do your

best, and be responsible for yourselves," she said. "Please use the tools you learned in Middle School to succeed in High School and beyond."

Guest speaker Jacqueline Katz, Valedictorian of Onteora High School's Class of 2017, asked the students to admit when they're wrong, to learn from their mistakes, and to focus on what's really important in life. "Character is far more important than your GPA

or a varsity letter," she asserted.

Urging the students to work hard, Jacqueline quoted famed inventor Thomas Edison, who said, "Genius is one percent inspiration, ninety-nine percent perspiration."

Congratulations and good luck to all!



Continuing an Onteora tradition, each student was given two flowers—a red one to keep, and a white one to give away to someone who had helped him or her succeed in Middle School.



Onteora's Community Mentor Presentations Showcase Students' Passions, Interests, Career Explorations

CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S PARTICIPANTS in Onteora's Gifted and Talented Community Mentor Program, who shared what they had learned and accomplished during their mentorships during a May 25 event held at the High School.

Onteora's Community Mentor Program offers students in Grades 9-12 the opportunity to pursue their interests and passions—and in some cases their "dream" careers—with the guidance of community-based professionals. This year's program led to mentorships in a wide variety of fields, including medicine, acting, law, ballet choreography, criminal



Former Onteora senior Rachel Sommer (right) poses with her community mentor, Sergeant Adam McGrath of the Woodstock Police Department. Rachel plans to study Criminal Justice at the University at Albany before attending the SUNY Ulster Police Academy.

justice, music recording, culinary arts, dentistry, fashion design, and land conservation.

According to Program Coordinator Kay Goldbeck, students are paired with community members who have expertise in the mentees' respective areas of interest. In addition to meeting regularly with their mentors, the students carry out independent research. "The program culminates in a celebration during which students present complex, polished projects to a public audience," she explained.

Thank you to all the community mentors, who so generously shared their time, advice, and expertise with our students!

Woodstock Students Are Going Green!

IN THE IMMORTAL WORDS OF KERMIT THE FROG, it's not easy being green. But Woodstock Elementary School students gave it their best effort, celebrating "Go Green Day" on May 18.

The school's young learners spent the day learning about the environment and ways to protect our planet. Rotating through eight different learning stations located throughout the school grounds, they brushed up on a range of environmentally important topics, including watershed protection, recycling, and wildlife rehabilitation.

Activities included playing a game that taught them about pheromones (scents given off by insects and mammals), examining and identifying aquatic insects found in local streams, and participating in a Nature Scavenger Hunt organized by Environmental Educator Matt Savatgy.

The scavenger hunters, said Mr. Savatgy, were given a list of natural objects typically found in the woods—like pine cones and feathers— as well as a few "surprises," like a snakeskin, wasp's nest, and animal skulls. "The goal was to get them to work together and to improve their observation skills," he explained.

At lunchtime, the school community gathered outdoors for a picnic, taking care to use reusable containers in an effort to keep waste to a minimum.

The special day was organized by Woodstock



Mike Spada, a scientist with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, shows Woodstock Elementary School students Presley Palin Gray and Sage Fusaro some aquatic insects during the school's Go Green Day.

teachers Mary Naccarato and Elizabeth Schiappa, who received assistance from a crew of highly knowledgeable presenters, including representatives from the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, the Ravensbeard Wildlife Center, the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County, a local storyteller, and Woodstock staff members.

STORYTELLER GETS PHOENICIA STUDENTS "GROOVIN IN THE GARDEN"



LAURIE McINTOSH, ALSO KNOWN AS "STORY LAURIE," brought her storytelling and musical gifts, and her love of the natural world, to Phoenicia Elementary School in May. During her garden-themed program, which was held in the community garden located on the school grounds, Ms. McIntosh asked the children to think about the various forces that help plants grow—everything from clean water to pollinating insects. The Andes-based storyteller soon had her young audience buzzing like bumblebees, wiggling like earthworms, whistling like birds, and singing about the importance of protecting the water upon which all life depends. Ms. McIntosh's visit was supported by a Catskill Watershed Corporation Public Education Grant.

LEVON HELM HONORED AS CHAMPION OF EDUCATION

FAMED DRUMMER LEVON HELM, whose benefit concerts raised thousands of dollars for Onteora Schools, has posthumously received the Ulster County School Boards Association's Distinguished Friend of Education Award.



Barbara O'Brien, Mr. Helm's former manager, accepted the award on behalf of the late drummer.

Onteora Superintendent Victoria McLaren, acting in her former role of Assistant Superintendent for Business, presented the award at the event, which was held May 25 at the Stonehedge Restaurant. "Levon Helm's generosity spread far and wide in this community he called home," said Ms. McLaren. "It is bittersweet to name him a Distinguished Friend of Education, as he is no longer here to accept the honor, and we'd love to see his beaming smile."

Mr. Helm's former manager, Barbara O'Brien, accepted the award in memory of the drummer, who passed away in 2012. "This [award] will go next to his Grammys," Ms. O'Brien said, adding that of all Helm's accolades as a musician and as an actor, he was most proud of the work he was able to do for his local community.

Middle School and Bennett Booklovers Engage in Literary “Speed Dating”

IN AN EFFORT TO PROMOTE SUMMER READING, Bennett Elementary School hosted an unusual version of “speed dating”: one that introduced students to good books rather than potential dates. A group of Middle School booklovers facilitated the event.

On May 24, a group of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students were invited to the school cafeteria, which had been transformed into a cozy literary café, complete with checkered tablecloths, twinkling tea lights, leafy plants, and of course heaping helpings of books.

Waiting in the café were members of the Middle School’s TUFS (Teaming Up for Success) club, who were eager to share their bookish enthusiasm with Bennett students. The younger readers spent an average of five minutes at each of eight locations, taking notes on enticing titles like *The Lighting Thief* by Rick Riordan and *The One and Only Ivan* by Katherine Applegate.

After “speed dating” all eight books, some of the Bennett students took to a microphone to say what books they planned to read over the summer, and why. Speaking about *The Graveyard Book* by Neil Gaiman, one student said, “It makes you want to turn the page even though you’re scared to!”

Reading Specialist Julie Maille and TUFS advisor



Members of the Middle School TUFS (Teaming up for Success) club and Bennett students talking about their favorite books during a literary-themed “Speed Dating” event.

Karen Grimm coordinated the afternoon’s activities. “We collaborated with the Bennett teachers to select a list of books for the event,” Ms. Maille explained. “We’re so grateful that the Middle School students were willing to help us nurture a love of reading here at Bennett!”

Onteora’s High-Flying Summer Scientists

SCHOOL WAS OUT FOR THE SUMMER—but that didn’t stop some Onteora students from brushing up on their academic skills at the District’s Summer Academy. Recently, Academy attendees in Grades 6, 7, and 8 learned how to use a drone to collect scientific data, which they then analyzed.

Environmental educator Matt Savatgy, who organized the Academy’s science-related activities, asked the children to “think about how scientists might use a drone.” Mapping the Earth, protecting wildlife from poachers, and learning about the behavior of ocean-dwelling creatures were just some of the ideas proposed by the young scientists.

Mr. Savatgy introduced retired Onteora teacher David Laks, who showed the youngsters how to fly a drone high above the treetops at Woodstock Elementary School, where classes were held this summer. Under the supervision of Mr. Laks, who now runs a video production company, the children used the drone to take photographs and video footage, which they later examined for signs indicating whether or not the trees were getting the resources they need.



The activity was in keeping with teacher Lori Matteson’s central theme for her students’ summer season, The Resilience of Life. Other teachers’ themes, for different age groups, included Camping (Pre-K and Kindergarten students), The Seashore (Grades 1-2), and Community Service (Grades 3-5).

“I tried to provide the students with exciting hands-on experiences beyond what they do in school,” said Mr. Savatgy, who also led a stream-exploration field trip for some of the older students. Science-related activities for younger students included sorting and classifying beach life, learning about fire safety, gardening, and helping to spruce up Woodstock’s Nature Trail.

The 17-day program, which was coordinated through the Office on Curriculum and

Instruction, was open to

children whose teachers believed they would benefit from experiencing intensive summer academic support. In addition to providing science enrichment activities, the curriculum focused on improving reading, writing, and math skills.



Onteora Summer Academy students Ronan Hegeman (left) and Sabine Crane-Euvino (right) hold drone equipment that they used to gather data on the trees surrounding Woodstock School. Looking on is retired teacher David Laks, who showed the students how to use the equipment.

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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Victoria McLaren

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To Postal Customer

Onteora Appoints New Business Official,
Athletic Director

WELCOME TO ONTEORA'S NEWEST ADMINISTRATORS, Monica Kim LaClair and Kim Pilla, who were appointed by the Board of Education on July 11. Mrs. LaClair was selected as the District's Assistant Superintendent for Business, and Ms. Pilla was chosen as the Director of Athletics, Physical Education, and Health and Dean of Students.

Mrs. LaClair, who assumed her new duties on August 14, has been the Director of Business and Support Services at Schodack Central School District in Rensselaer County since 2011. From 2007-2011, she served as the Treasurer of Onteora. She is also a Certified Public Accountant and a past president of the Woodstock PTA.

An Onteora graduate (Class of 1984), Mrs. LaClair has a BS in Economics from the University of Rochester, an MS in Accounting from SUNY Albany, and a Certificate of Advanced Study in School Business Administration from SUNY New Paltz. Her certifications include School District Business Leader.

Mrs. LaClair is looking forward to her new duties. "Onteora is a truly special place, and I am very excited and honored to be returning as part of the Administrative team," she said. "I look forward to supporting the students, the staff, and the community and helping the District meet its educational vision for the future."

Ms. Pilla, who assumed her new position on July 24, has

25 years of experience as a physical education teacher. Twenty-two of those years were with the Beacon City School District.

Graduating from SUNY Cortland with a bachelor's degree in Education (physical education), she holds a permanent certificate in Physical Education K-12. She graduated from Mount Saint Mary College with a master's degree in Elementary Education and from SUNY New Paltz with an advanced certificate in school administration. She holds SDL (School District Leader) and SBL (School Building Leader) Certifications.

Ms. Pilla has extensive coaching experience, having served as head Varsity Girls Basketball Coach, head Varsity Girls Soccer coach, and a youth soccer coach. She was a three-time *Poughkeepsie Journal* Coach of the Year as well as a three-time Section 1 Coach of the Year.

Other experience includes serving as an Instructional Support Teacher, District Parent Communicator, Chairperson of a District Health and Wellness Committee, a Mentor Teacher for non-tenured teachers, and President of the Beacon Teachers Association.

Ms. Pilla looks forward to tackling new challenges at Onteora. "I am super excited to have been given the opportunity to join the Onteora school community and look forward to working collaboratively with our students, staff, parents, and community to continue the success for our students in Onteora," she said.



Monica Kim LaClair (left) has returned to Onteora to serve as the District's Assistant Superintendent for Business. Kim Pilla (right) is the new Director of Athletics, Physical Education, and Health and Dean of Students.



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