

ONTEORA

Fall 2017

MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

DEAR ONTEORA COMMUNITY MEMBERS,

The school year is off to a great start! The feedback I have received is that there is a positive, optimistic feeling in the schools, and nothing could make me happier.

My primary goal this year is to improve communications within the school district. Specifically, I would like all members of the Onteora community to be aware of what is happening in our school buildings, at our District office, and with the Board of Education. I am also hoping that communications can be improved within and between each stakeholder group—everyone from parents to principals, teachers to trustees, students to community members. It is easier to support each other when we know what everyone else is doing.

To this end, Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) officers from all three elementary buildings will be meeting with me for a series of “PTA Summits.” The goal of these summits will be to share what each PTA has planned for the year, and to see how they all can be resources for each other.

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**Onteora
Homecoming
on pages 4-5**

Onteora Students Are Off To A Great Start!

ONTEORA STUDENTS KICKED OFF THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR ON SEPTEMBER 6, shortly after Labor Day. Rainy skies couldn't dampen the eager sense of anticipation traditionally inspired by the first day of school.

Some 1,267 students bounded off school buses, out of family cars, and up the school sidewalks, happily reconnecting with friends and classmates after the long summer break. Teachers and staff members were on hand to welcome the students as they arrived, helping the youngest ones off the buses, directing students to their classrooms, and reassuring any nervous youngsters.

Kindergarten students arrived on their own school buses, accompanied by parents and guardians. Squeezing themselves into pint-sized chairs, the adults met teachers, learned about classroom expectations, and helped their children settle into their new learning environments.

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Woodstock Grade 3 students **Kassandra Montero** and **Jonah Brekke** (above) are hard at work on the first day of school. Below, Onteora students greet the new school year with smiles and anticipation.



Down on the Farm with Woodstock's First Graders



Farmer Susan Hurd talks about fruits, vegetables, flowers, and farming with Woodstock Grade 1 students during the children's field trip to her family's farm.

AS ANY FIRST GRADER KNOWS, “A” IS FOR APPLE. But did you know that apple orchards make excellent outdoor classrooms?

Woodstock Elementary School’s Grade 1 students know that, and much, much more, thanks to a recent field trip to Hurds Family Farm.

Educational activities abounded during the October 2 outing, as the young learners identified and harvested apples, observed the behavior of farm animals, sounded out words (from “apples” to “zinnias”) on the bilingual ABC Nature Trail, and showed off their botanical knowledge in a fruit-and-vegetable sorting activity.

Under the guidance of Susan Hurd, one of the farm’s owners, the students demonstrated that they knew the difference between seeds and stems, fruits and leaves, roots and flowers. They eagerly identified sunflowers, broccoli, tomatoes, and other plants from the farm’s fields and gardens.

If the students didn’t know it already, they learned that the Spanish word for “apple” is “manzana,” and that maple syrup (representing “M” on the ABC Nature Trail) is locally produced.

In addition to exercising their minds, the youngsters exercised their bodies. They bounced on a “Big Apple” air pillow, pedaled mini-tractors around a track, scrambled down a giant slide, and stretched as high as they could to pick the most inviting apples.

The children’s visit was a big success, according to Grade 1 teacher Carol Bower. “It was a highly educational school day, full of fun and engaged learning!” she said.



Woodstock Grade 1 students listen intently to safety instructions during a visit to Hurds Family Farm in early autumn.

MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Administrators have started coming together for monthly retreat meetings, with a focus on improving our work as a team. There have also been joint meetings with the leadership of the Ontario Teachers Association (OTA) and the Ontario Administrators Association (OAA) to discuss concerns, ideas, and plans for the instructional staff in our District.

In addition, Board President Kevin Salem and I had an initial meeting that included representatives of all stakeholder groups. Our aim was to encourage an open conversation in which we all can participate. If this proves to be a constructive vehicle for conversation, we will continue with this process; if not, we will try other options.

It is my objective to be in the schools and community as much as possible. I thoroughly enjoyed Olive Day as well as Homecoming, which boasted our biggest turnout in years.

Walking through the buildings, I have been encouraged by the calm, happy atmosphere and the smiling welcome I receive. As I visit classrooms, I am so impressed by what our instructional staff does. To watch these professionals provide educational opportunities for our students is awesome.

I have already had a number of invitations, and would welcome receiving more of them. Please continue to let me know if there are opportunities for me to attend community events, school events, or events in a classroom or department. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Victoria McLaren
ONTEORA
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Phoenicia Afterschool Program Boosts Literacy and Academic Skills

THE POWER OF WORDS. That’s the theme of an innovative afterschool program taking place at Phoenicia Elementary School this year.

The initiative, the Healthy Kids Extended Day Program, is a New York 21st Century Grant recipient for 2017/2018. “The State funding is allowing this wonderful program to be offered free of charge to children who, in the view of their teachers and parents or guardians, would benefit from extra academic enrichment activities and instructional help,” says Phoenicia Principal Linda Sella.

On a recent afternoon, 18 students eagerly tackled a project that honed their literacy, art, and communication skills. Jasmin Mitchell, the program’s Art and Museum Specialist, divided the children into groups, asking each group to translate a “secret” word into drawings. Once they were finished with their word pictures, the students stood in front of their peers, proudly sharing the thinking behind their creations.

One child explained that he pictured “happiness” as a beautiful beach, while another envisioned it as a yellow smiley face. The word “kindness” inspired one child to draw an image of a helpful teacher, while “love” prompted another young artist to show his love for his country with a drawing of a heart-covered American flag.

Afterwards, the children moved on to reading time. Depending on their reading levels, the children read on their own, with a partner, or in a group, with assistance from Onteora Reading Specialist Nicole Ryan or one of the program’s other instructors.

Mrs. Ryan, who is also a Special Education teacher, is pleased to help boost literacy at Phoenicia. “Education is not a race,” she notes. “A child who learns to read at age three has in no way ‘won’ over a child who learns to read at age six or seven.” Learning and education, she explains, are lifelong processes, and she’s happy to be working for a program that is helping students become lifelong learners.

Reading was followed by homework time. Children pulled out their assignments, asking for adult help as needed.

Amanda Johnson, the 21st Century Program Director, says that literacy is just one focus of the Phoenicia afterschool program, albeit the primary one. “Community members will be sharing their love of reading, dance, nature, arts and crafts, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math),” she says.

There will be project-based learning activities, regular trips to the school and town libraries, and plenty of outdoor play and exploration. “But all aspects of the program will demonstrate the incredible power of words,” Ms. Johnson stresses. “The children will keep journals, play word games, build their vocabulary, work on their reading, and have a great time!”

The program’s first session, which runs from October 11-December 22, will be followed by a second session, which will run from January 2-March 16.



Phoenicia students William Rhodes and Siobhan Almon, who are enrolled in the school's Healthy Kids Extended Day Program, discuss the pictures they created to illustrate various words.



Kamila Espinoza Vargas, Kenneth Kasapoglu, and Konnor Nance share their word-inspired drawings.



Onteora Reading Specialist Nicole Ryan reading with Phoenicia students Leticia Marin and Stephen Matheson during the school's Healthy Kids Extended Day Program.



Art and Museum Specialist Jasmin Mitchell reads with Phoenicia student Josh Carr during the school's afterschool program, which aims to sharpen literacy and academic skills.

Onteora Students Are Off To A Great Start!

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The opening day of school marked a new beginning for a number of educators as well. In addition to the District's newest administrators, Assistant Superintendent for Business Monica Kim LaClair and Director of Athletics, Physical Education, and Health/Dean of Students Kim Pilla, Onteora welcomed a number of new instructional staff members. Joining the Onteora team this year are Danielle Hommel (part-time Music teacher, Bennett), Marissa Basalone (Teaching Assistant, Woodstock), Jonathan Eldridge (Music teacher, Middle School/High School), and Robin Renahan (Library Media Specialist, Bennett).

Also greeting the students was Victoria McLaren, who stepped into the Superintendent's position on July 1. Ms. McLaren was appointed to her new post after previously serving as Interim Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent for Business.

Shortly after the school buses departed and the first bells rang, teachers and students had already begun to settle into their familiar routines. Backpacks, raingear, and lunchboxes were stowed away. Pencils were sharpened, textbooks were cracked open, computers were turned on, and never-used notebooks began to fill up with the first class notes of the new academic year.

For Onteora's students, teachers, and staff, another year of learning has begun!



Onteora Comes Home!

ONTEORA CELEBRATED HOMECOMING ON SEPTEMBER 23, enjoying one of the biggest turnouts in years. Highlights of the festivities included a parade of fall sports teams, recognition of senior athletes, and an impressive showing by the Varsity Football team, which defeated Eldred by a score of 48 to 26.

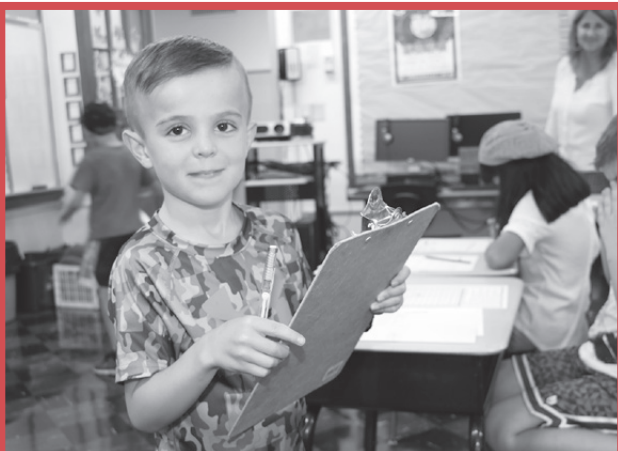
This year marked the return of Varsity Football to Onteora after an absence of three years, noted Director of Athletics, Physical Education, and Health/Dean of Students Kim Pilla. "The last time Onteora fielded a Varsity Football team was 2013," she said. "The last win was against Pine Plains on September 21, 2013."

There was also a coronation, of course, as Homecoming King Miles Eberhard and Homecoming Queen Maddie Mood were introduced, along with this year's Homecoming Court: Ryan Clark, Olivia Ingalsbe, George Clapper, Ruby Price, Joseph Prusack, Alizay Shah, Cole Whitehead, Clara Flores Reininger, Zachary Chartrand, and Julianne Christofera.

Another high point of the festivities was a moving rendition of the "Star Spangled Banner" by Onteora alumnus Lane Stowe (Class of 1987) and the Onteora Pep Band. "I came back to celebrate my 30th Class Reunion," Mr. Stowe said. "It was great for my wife Jenn and I to catch up with friends and spend time with family!" Homecoming also gave the professional musician the opportunity to reunite with his brother Lee (OCS Class of 1984) and his friends Debra Kriesberg (Class of 1987) and Sean Tarleton (Class of 1985) for a memorable musical performance at the Boiceville Inn.

It was another Homecoming to remember!





Above photo courtesy of Coll Anderson



Woodstock Wonderland Playground Receives Finishing Touches

WOODSTOCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL'S "NEW" PLAYGROUND, built in the fall of 2015, just keeps getting better and better.

A playground committee, headed by parent Emma Wyman and consisting of parents, Principal Scott Richards, and staff members, meets monthly to plan improvements to the play area, which the school community voted to name "Woodstock Wonderland."

Last June, whimsical panels that had been salvaged from the old Wonderworks playground found a new home at Wonderland, reports Committee member Marcia Panza, the school nurse. Work continued over the summer, with the Onteora facilities department taking the lead. "They paved the blacktop, added handicapped access, created a walking path that also serves as a tick barrier, installed a drinking fountain, and made an asphalt circle that will

be painted to create a labyrinth," she says.

The Committee has also chosen a "buddy bench" designed by a parent, who is in the process of fabricating it. "Our third grade students will be painting

panels for the fence near the labyrinth as 'leave behind' gifts to the school," explains Mrs. Panza.

Responding to an increase in weekend visitors to the playground, the Committee has identified the need for more benches. "We want to paint games on the blacktop, and are thinking of creating a human sundial," she adds. Plans also call for the installation of a brass plaque

honoring the memory of the late Ellen Robbins, the parent who had headed the Wonderworks Committee.

"All in all, we have accomplished many things since we first built the playground, and we have more dreams to pursue," Mrs. Panza concludes.



Students frolicking on Woodstock Elementary School's "new" playground, which continues to be improved.

BENNETT RUNNERS SUPPORT HURRICANE RELIEF EFFORTS

Continuing a fall tradition, Bennett Elementary School students recently stormed onto the Onteora track, waving colorful banners and sporting handmade

"dresses" made from red T-shirts. The October 14 event, patterned after a charity run held each year in New Orleans, raised funds for school field trips as well as for hurricane relief efforts in Puerto Rico. Previous recipients of Red Dress Run funds include the Woodstock Animal Sanctuary, the Prattsville Hurricane Relief Fund, Kingston's Forsythe Park, and organizations assisting Ulster County Migrant Workers.



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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

George Dunkel

CLASS OF 1957

GEORGE DUNKEL, A MEMBER OF ONTEORA'S FOURTH GRADUATING CLASS, attended a one-room schoolhouse in Lake Hill. He went on to become president of three banks, two of which he helped start. Onteora, he believes, helped pave the way for his professional success. "Onteora was the center of my world," he declares. "I had many friends, and I appreciated the education that I received there."

Mr. Dunkel moved to Ulster County from Westchester when his father bought the Lake Hill Trading Post. "We sold everything—groceries, overalls, gasoline, boots—and my father was the postmaster," he recalls. The Lake Hill Schoolhouse had an artesian well on the grounds. "Every day, local people would come to the school with pails," he says.

Struggling to adjust to his new school, which had just 17 or 18 students, young George—who was in fifth grade—ran away. "Mrs. [Hazel] Osborne, the school nurse who was also the truant officer, found me," he laughs. "I then went to St. Joseph's School in Kingston for 6th and 7th grades."

In 1952, Mr. Dunkel enrolled in the brand-new Onteora Central School (OCS), which drew students that previously would have attended one of the area's one- and two-room schoolhouses. The year the school opened, it served students in Kindergarten through Grade 11. Students who would have been seniors that year were allowed to finish High School and graduate from Kingston High School in June 1953. "My 8th grade class graduation in June 1953 was the first-ever graduation ceremony at OCS," he says.

The creation of a consolidated school district led to a much-improved academic environment, he believes, one that exposed students not only to reading, writing, history, and arithmetic but also to art, music, sports, and industrial arts.

Some of his favorite Onteora memories revolve around Music teacher Harry Simon. "I played drums in the school band for five years," he remembers. "I also played Glen Miller-type songs with the school dance band, which performed at Rotary Clubs, the Masonic

Lodge, and other local venues."

Other Onteora teachers left their mark on the future banker, including Vincent Carey (Science), Kathleen Donovan (English), Frank Andreone (Social Studies), Robert Thornell (English), Bernie Stahl (Business), Earl Proper (Music Appreciation), and Ed Witko (Physical Education).

"My experience at Onteora prepared me for interacting with all types of people on a daily basis," he muses. "At Onteora, I dealt with my peers as well as teachers and school administrators. As a banker, these people skills have served me very well during my entire career."

Active in the banking industry since 1959, he took night classes at Iona College in New Rochelle, graduating in 1971 with a BBA degree in Finance. He subsequently received a diploma from the Stonier Graduate School of Banking.

His impressive résumé includes stints as president and CEO of the State Bank of Westchester, the Westchester Bank, and the Community Bank of Sullivan County. In addition, he served on the Board of E-Tran, Inc. and was a director of the Atlantic Central Bankers Bank, Mid-Hudson Cooperative Insurance Company, New York Bankers Association, Independent Bankers Association of New York State, and Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development.

Currently, Mr. Dunkel serves as the president of Searsville Associates, which provides consulting services to the community banking industry. He enjoys spending time with his family, which includes his wife, Theresa, four children, and 10 grandchildren (with one more on the way).

Although he now lives in Pine Bush, he still keeps in touch with his Onteora roots. He proudly marched with the "Golden Alumni" at Onteora's 2017 Commencement ceremony.

"My 1957 graduating class had 37 students," he says. "I still communicate with several of my former classmates via e-mail on a weekly basis. I look back at my five years at OCS very fondly."



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Bennett Students are Ready to Play Ball!

Bennett students got a jump on the basketball season by attending a special sports camp held in late August. Twenty-five children from Grades 5 and 6 attended the free four-day camp, which took place in a gym at the High School/Middle School. "The camp was very successful," said Physical Education teacher Christopher Kasprzyk, who ran the camp with English teacher Lori Matteson with assistance from Physical Education teacher/Basketball Coach Andy Occhi, former Onteora basketball standout Julia Occhi, and Grade 10 Onteora athlete Jake Stern. "The young players honed their ball-handling and scoring skills and had a blast learning more about the game," Mr. Kasprzyk enthused. "They're ready to play ball!"



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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Victoria McLaren

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New Middle School Club
Focuses on Robotics and Coding

THERE'S A NEW EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL THIS YEAR: the Robotics and Coding Club, which will meet on Monday afternoons throughout the school year.

According to Club advisor Kate Van Baren, the club is open to any Middle School student interested in becoming familiar with basic computer programming. "In addition to learning how to write code – instructions that computers can understand – the club members will build and control robots and hone their technical literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills," Ms. Van Baren explains. "The students will also have the opportunity to showcase their teamwork, knowledge, and abilities in robotics competitions." Computer programming is not only fun, notes Ms. Van Baren, but it's also one of the nation's fastest-growing occupations.

The club is an extension of Ms. Van Baren's pre-engineering elective class, she explains. "Not everyone who is interested in coding and robotics is able to fit this class into their schedules, but they may be able to find time after school to learn about them," she says. "I also wanted to give my pre-engineering students the opportunity to delve more deeply into coding than would be possible during a regular class period."

Students are welcome to join the club at any time during the year. The meetings take place in Room 165.



Ms. Van Baren assists Ben Zeh, a student in her pre-engineering class, with a coding exercise.



Pictured are students from Ms. Van Baren's pre-engineering class, who have been learning how to code and how to program LEGO robots to accomplish specific tasks.

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