

ONTEORA

Fall 2018

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

DEAR ONTEORA COMMUNITY,

The school year is in full swing once again, and the holiday season is already here.

Our Middle School students recently participated in a Veterans Day flagpole-dedication ceremony. Prior to the ceremony, the students had the opportunity to hear from many of the veterans in our community.

Our Elementary School students had the opportunity to give back to community members by hosting their schools' annual Senior Thanksgiving luncheons. The students, who served a delicious Thanksgiving meal to their guests, also showed off their musical talents during the luncheons.

I also wanted to take a moment to highlight the Board of Education's goals for the year. They are:

1. Support the development of a long-term, District-wide plan that strategically addresses educational goals, declining enrollment, facilities, community impact, budget and cost-saving measures. Accomplish this through input from Superintendent recommendations, Board Ad Hoc committee, Shared Decision Making committee and community outreach;
2. Support efforts to foster a more positive culture and climate within the District, including the exploration of a Culture and Climate survey, initiatives to increase school spirit, ongoing diversity education for students and staff, commitment to [furthering] restorative justice training and practices, and a sustained effort to better publicize the District's accomplishments and reach the community through social media;

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Middle School Muralists Transform Hallway into a Work of Art

THIS FALL, PROFESSIONAL MURALIST AND TEACHING ARTIST JOE PIMENTEL brought his artistic vision to Ontario Middle School, where he collaborated with students on a colorful mural in one of the school's hallways. The new mural, which came to life during the week of October 9-12, was inspired by the school's motto, "We collaborate, We Show Respect and Responsibility, We Learn, We Are Kind."

Middle School Principal Jennifer O'Connor explained how the mural's design came about. "I told Joe all the great things about our school, and he started from there," she said. "This project is about our school, and it's about the Middle School making something that's ours."

"It was a great experience," added Mr. Pimentel, who is based in Newburgh. "I showed them how to create a large-scale work in a short amount of time to give them ownership of the work so they can walk by the mural and say, 'I did that; I helped to create it.' "



Professional muralist and teaching artist Joe Pimentel adds some finishing touches to the Middle School's new mural, which he created with assistance from students.



Middle School student Noelle Crandell (left) is all smiles as she helps paint a mural inspired by the school's motto. Also assisting are Levi DeGroff (right, foreground), Isabella Hamilton (center), and Sean Hallinan (below).



Woodstock Students Know that ‘A’ is for Apple

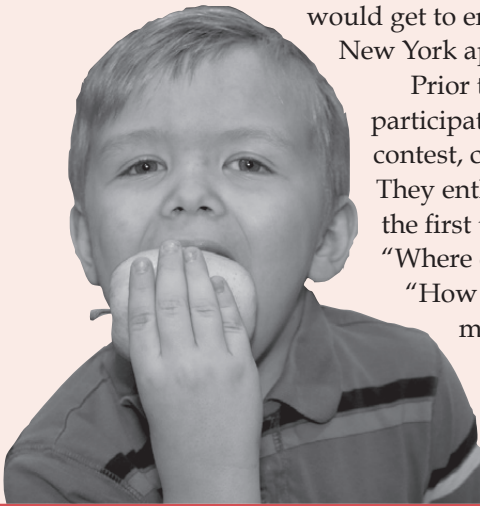


Woodstock Elementary School students pose with their apples during the Big Apple Crunch event in October.

WOODSTOCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL celebrated one of our region’s most delicious and healthy products on October 25 by participating in the Big Apple Crunch, a statewide challenge sponsored in part by the New York Apple Association. All across New York State, students bit into a local apple on the same day, at the same time. All three Onteora elementary schools participated.

According to School Lunch Manager Christine Downs, the apples, which come from several local orchards, were purchased by Onteora’s Health and Wellness Committee through a donation from Hannaford. “We thought it would be fun to ‘crunch’ with the rest of New York,” said Mrs. Downs. “If nothing else, our students would get to enjoy a fresh, crisp, New York apple!”

Prior to the Big Crunch, the students participated in an apple-themed trivia contest, courtesy of the school’s PTA. They enthusiastically competed to be the first to answer such questions as “Where did the apple originate?” and “How many apples does it take to make a gallon of apple cider?”



Woodstock student Jake Boley crunches into a delicious local apple.

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

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3. Increase student knowledge and engagement in civics, grades K-12; and
4. Support the continued review of homework reform, including the revision of Board’s Homework Policy with input from all stakeholders.

These are all initiatives that our Board feels strongly about, and we will be working to support as we move through the year. I will be attending PTA meetings in the coming weeks to discuss these goals and the steps we will be taking to achieve progress on them. The Board has stated that these goals are not intended to all be completed during this school year, but that these are their priorities as we move forward.

You will continue to hear more about these goals and our progress through our newsletters, our Facebook page, and at our Board meetings. If you are not able to attend Board meetings, you can always watch the videos on our website.

I hope that everyone has an enjoyable holiday season!

Sincerely,
Victoria McLaren
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Pumpkin Power at Phoenicia Elementary School

Phoenicia students transformed their school cafeteria into a fanciful pumpkin patch on October 26, as the school’s PTA sponsored an after-school painting party. Using paint, glitter, stickers, and lots of creativity, the students turned ordinary, plain-Jane pumpkins into Halloween-worthy works of art! Many thanks to everyone who helped make this event a howling success!



Phoenicia students who created Halloween pumpkins during a PTA-sponsored event included (from right to left) Patrick McLoughlin, Jayson Pultz, Audrey Wallace, and Nerik Marin.

Bennett Students Learn to be Global Citizens

LAST JUNE, BENNETT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GRADE 5 STUDENTS received a valuable lesson in global affairs and in giving back. Thanks to this lesson – and the generosity of a local philanthropist – school-aged children in Guatemala will soon be enjoying better nutrition.

The philanthropist, who wishes to remain anonymous, asked Onteora parent Julia Rose to work with students to choose a worthy charitable endeavor that would assist children living in poverty. There would be no cost to the students or the school, as the mystery benefactor pledged to make the subsequent \$25,000 charitable donation.

Ms. Rose brought the proposal to Bennett Elementary School, where Grade 5 teachers, along with Principal Gabriel Buono and Reading Specialist Julie Maille, embraced the opportunity to offer a project-based learning experience centered on humanitarian aid.

The fifth graders were presented with two projects sponsored by CARE, a non-governmental humanitarian organization that fights poverty around the world. One project focused on improving nutrition and helping small farmers in Guatemala, while the other aimed to improve food and nutritional security and promote climate-change adaptation in the northern Andean highlands of Ecuador.

During the course of one week in mid-June, the Bennett students researched and debated the relative merits of both projects. Samantha Jenkins, CARE’s Director of Development, visited the school to provide information about the projects and her organization’s mission.

Rotating between different learning stations, the children immersed themselves in the geography, economics, culture, and history of Ecuador and Guatemala. They also discussed how issues like climate change and food insecurity can affect the well-being of children.

Among other things, the students learned how CARE worked in 84 countries last year, reaching 122 million people around the world.

“Our hope was to empower and inspire young people to be a part of positive change,” said Ms. Rose. “Given the levels of engagement, excitement, and insightfulness that we saw, I think we are on the right track.”

After much discussion and a grade-wide vote, the children decided to support the Guatemalan project. The winning project was announced at a celebratory luncheon in the school cafeteria, complete with Guatemalan-style chicken tacos and fried yucca balls, a dish popular in Ecuador.

In addition to Ms. Rose, special guests at the luncheon included CARE representative Sarah Lynch, who is based in West Shokan (in an office located above Marty’s Mercantile). “You are all global citizens,” said Ms. Lynch, who serves as CARE’s Senior Director of Global Policy Initiatives.

Checking in via Skype from Atlanta was Ricardo Caceres, Resource Mobilization Director for CARE’s Latin America and the Caribbean Division, who answered the children’s questions and thanked them for their hard work.

Plans call for the Bennett students to participate in another Skype call in December. At that time, they will be able to speak with some of the Guatemalan children who are being helped by the project.

Principal Buono expressed his gratitude to everyone who helped his students participate in this collaborative decision-making process, which promises to have a positive impact on thousands of children living in poverty. “They not only honed their research, reading, writing, debating, and academic skills, but they also increased their awareness of the world around them,” he said. “They learned how they can help bring about the change they want to see.”

For more information about CARE, visit www.care.org.



At the end of a week-long learning experience focusing on humanitarian aid, Bennett students enjoyed a celebratory luncheon featuring Guatemalan-style tacos and fried yucca balls, a dish popular in Ecuador. Pictured are Grade 5 teacher Kristen Warren and Bennett students Harold Stange and Esynce Cordero.



Onteora parent Julia Rose speaking with Bennett students after they voted to support a project that will help impoverished Guatemalan children.



CARE representative Sarah Lynch, who is based in West Shokan, talks to Bennett students about how the project they voted to support will assist Guatemalan children living in poverty.

Bennett Students Promote School Safety

SAFETY COMES FIRST AT BENNETT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, where a number of Grade 6 students recently joined the school’s inaugural Safety Patrol. Deputy Thomas Sharon, Onteora’s School Resource Officer, inducted the new members during an October 5 ceremony held on the school’s front steps.

After pledging to do their best to help keep their fellow students safe, the newly minted safety patrollers – Carla Alvarez, Pearl Crystal Soler, Kyle Berryann, Jacob Parsi, and Nolan VanBlarcom – received neon-bright sashes and official-looking badges from Deputy Sharon.

The students, who will meet with Deputy Sharon once a month, will patrol the school hallways before the morning announcements and after students have been dismissed for the day. Their reasons for joining varied. “I hope to keep the halls safe from students running into each other and causing disasters,” explained Nolan. “I want to spread positivity and help make sure kids aren’t doing bad things,” said Pearl. “I want to be a good leader,” added Kyle.

The students will not only promote safe behavior but kind behavior as well, said Deputy Sharon. “If there is a fourth grader struggling with their backpack, a Safety Patrol member might ask if they need help,” he explained.



Onteora’s School Resource Officer, Deputy Thomas Sharon, leads members of the Bennett Safety Patrol in a recitation of the Safety Patrol pledge.

Onteora Shows Its Homecoming Spirit

HONORING ITS ATHLETES DURING HOMECOMING WEEKEND IS A VENERABLE ONTEORA TRADITION. This year’s Homecoming celebration featured a hard-fought contest against Red Hook, as well as field hockey, soccer, volleyball, and cross-country competitions. Students, alumni, and community members came out in force to show their school pride, undeterred by chilly temperatures and periodic rain showers.

Highlights of the annual event included a spirited pep rally, a roaring bonfire, and the ceremonial crowning of the Homecoming King and Queen. Taking advantage of the crowds, school clubs and student organizations held fund-raisers, peddling everything from pumpkins to “walking tacos.”

Prior to the start of the football game, the fall athletes paraded around the school track, proudly holding their teams’ banners. The seniors, along with their beaming parents, were recognized during halftime. A Homecoming arch made of red and white balloons swayed in the breeze, providing a colorful backdrop for family portraits.

The fun and festivities came to a close with the Homecoming dance, held on Saturday evening. A most memorable time was had by all!



Onteora Runners Shine at States

KUDOS TO THE FOUR ONTEORA ATHLETES who raced in the State cross-country championships on November 10. Satch Sumner-Waldman earned a 7th place medal by finishing the 5-K course with a time of 16:53.9. Satch also received the Section 9 Class C Sportsmanship Award, an honor bestowed by area coaches. This is the second time that he has received the award.

Also competing in the Class C race was teammate Kentaro Mainieri, who placed 90th with a time of 19:20.6. During the girls' race, Erin Downs (21:43.3) placed 63rd, and Lucciana Robertson (22:50.1) finished 99th.

Congrats to all for a great race and a terrific season!



Onteora athletes jumping for joy before the recent New York State cross-country championships. Pictured, from left to right, are Erin Downs, Lucciana Robertson, Satch Sumner-Waldman, and Kentaro Mainieri. Photo courtesy of Jason Calinda.



Veterans Help Dedicate New Flagpole at Middle School/High School



SHORTLY AFTER VETERANS DAY, members of American Legion Post 1627 visited Onteora Middle School to dedicate a new flagpole located in front of the school. Prior to the November 14 flag-raising ceremony, the local veterans spoke to the students about the meaning of the Stars and Stripes, the importance of serving one's country, and the differences between the various branches of the armed forces.



Post Commander Ron Wright (Air Force) led a contingent of veterans that included Frank Gille (Navy), Roy Coutinho (Navy), Martin Giuliano (Army National Guard), George Hass (Army), Stanley Pollard (Army), John Couillard (Army, Navy, Air Force), John Hansen (Marine Corps), Purdy Halstead (Army), and Angelo Russo (Air Force). Onteora teacher and Navy veteran Andrew Occhi also addressed the assembly.

Middle School Principal Jennifer O'Connor explained that the new, taller flagpole, located behind the school's electric sign, replaces one that had been increasingly obscured by trees. "We're delighted that the veterans are here to help us dedicate our new flagpole," said Ms. O'Connor.

Concluding the dedication ceremony, the Middle School Symphonic Band played the National Anthem as Old Glory was unfurled and raised up the new flagpole.

ONTEORA MUSIC STUDENTS SELECTED TO AREA ALL-STATE

Congratulations to the following Onteora music ensemble members, who were chosen to perform at the annual New York State School Music Association Area All-State festival held at Wallkill High School on November 16 and 17: Miriam Silver-Altman and Jules Schauflier (Orchestra); Adrienne Cox, Archie Lewis-Harris, and Satch Sumner-Waldman (Band); Justin Blydenburgh and Adam McCutcheon (Mixed Choir); Lorelei Davis, Grace Foster, and Lola Mainieri (Treble Choir).

Selection to these groups were based upon NYSSMA Solo Festival scores from last spring.



Pre-K Students Have a Howling Good Time



Onteora Pre-K students Rhodes Constant, Leah Garrison, and Mavis Heady get ready to go trick-or-treating with their classmates at First Steps Early Child Education Center in Woodstock.

WHAT DO PIRATES, POLICEMEN, AND PRINCESSES HAVE IN COMMON? They, along with a host of other Halloween-inspired characters, trooped through the neighborhood surrounding First Steps Early Child Education Center in Woodstock the morning of October 31. Disguised by their creative outfits, Onteora students enrolled in the Pre-K program administered by First Steps went trick-or-treating at a number of houses. The neighbors—many of them dressed in their own Halloween costumes—handed out treats and trinkets to the delighted children. Many thanks to all who helped make the youngsters' outing a howling success!

High School Hosts Film-Themed Career Day

LIGHTS, CAMERAS, CAREERS! Collaborating with the Woodstock Film Festival, Onteora High School hosted a film-themed Career Day on October 12. The event, which introduced students from throughout the region to some of the many careers available in the film industry, kicked off with a screening of *Personal Statement*, a documentary directed by Juliane Dressner. Accompanying Ms. Dressner was one of the stars of the film, Enoch Jemmott.

After the screening, students had the opportunity to meet with various industry professionals, including Jenna Laurenzo, director of *Lez Bomb*; Cain DeVore (writer), William Fichtner (director, actor), and Michael Deragon (composer) of *Cold Brook*; and Josh Folan (producer) and Cait Cortelyou (producer, actress) of *Ask for Jane*.

Attending Career Day were students from Onteora, Ellenville, Woodstock Day School, and Ulster BOCES.



High School student Ben Johansen (left) interviews Enoch Jemmott, one of the students featured in the documentary *Personal Statement*, during the Career Day sponsored by the Woodstock Film Festival.

David Nelsen-Epstein, who teaches History as well as filmmaking at Onteora, explained why he thinks the annual Career Day is so popular among students. “Kids come to filmmaking naturally,” he said. “It is a logical outcropping of the creativity that youth are swimming in. And introducing them to established professionals anchors their dreams to reality.”



Cain DeVore, William Fichtner, and Michael Deragon, who all contributed their talents to the film *Cold Brook*, speaking to students during the film-inspired Career Day event held at the High School.



Jenna Laurenzo, director of *Lez Bomb*, talks to the students attending the Woodstock Film Festival's Career Day. Ms. Laurenzo is also one of the stars of the film.

Onteora’s School Lunch Manager Receives Excellence in Administration Award

KUDOS TO ONTEORA SCHOOL LUNCH MANAGER CHRISTINE DOWNS, who was recently recognized by the Mid-Hudson School Study Council for Excellence in Administration. The October 18 ceremony honored the SUNY Oneonta and Culinary Institute of America grad for a number of achievements, including helping to raise funds to purchase a freezer so that local produce can be served year-round to Onteora students, and incorporating fresh vegetables grown in our elementary school gardens into school lunch menus. A sentence in the event’s program summed up her accomplishments at Onteora: “Because of her willingness, effort, and creativity, a true garden-to-table program has been established.”

Superintendent of Schools Victoria McLaren agrees that this award was a well-deserved one. “We are so fortunate to have someone as accomplished, talented, and caring as Christine feeding our students,” she said.

Congrats—and thank you for helping to make our school lunches so healthy and delicious!



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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT
Joe DiGiovanni
CLASS OF 1961

JOE DIGIOVANNI'S PASSIONS FOR EDUCATION AND SPORTS FLOURISHED AT ONTEORA, where he lettered in three sports (football, basketball, and baseball) and went on to forge an award-winning career as a teacher, coach, and athletic director.

"Onteora has always been part of my life, beginning in 1957 as a student athlete," Mr. DiGiovanni recalled. After receiving a Bachelor of Science in Education from Illinois State University and a Master of Science in Education from SUNY Cortland, he returned to Onteora, working first as a physical education teacher at West Hurley Elementary School and then teaching Driver's Education and Physical Education at the Middle/High School.

Mr. DiGiovanni then added coaching to his repertoire, serving as head varsity football coach for five seasons and varsity baseball coach for 10 seasons.

Becoming athletic director was a natural step, he stated.

"The intricacies of heading an athletic program in its entirety interested me as a result of being involved in athletics at all levels – participation, leadership, instruction, planning, budgeting, regulations, and philosophy," he said. "I secured an Administrative License and finished the last third of my career as Director of Physical Education and Athletics and as an Administrative Assistant handling discipline."

Highlights of his career included being named New York State Athletic Administrators Association (NYSAAA) Athletic Administrator of the Year in 2000.

Now retired, Mr. DiGiovanni and his wife split their time between Kingston and Florida. He remains grateful for his years at Onteora. "I will always have fond memories of helping to inspire Onteora's students to do their best in their studies and on the field of play, knowing that success comes with dedication, consistency, and fairness," he said.

Pointing to his longtime involvement with, and loyalty to, the Onteora community, Mr. DiGiovanni shares one of his favorite sayings. "My blood," he declared, "is Onteora red!"

"I will always have fond memories of helping to inspire Onteora's students to do their best in their studies and on the field of play, knowing that success comes with dedication, consistency, and fairness."

Joe DiGiovanni, Class of 1961

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INFORMATION

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DISTRICT OFFICE..... (845) 657-6383

Superintendent of Schools
Victoria McLaren.....657-6383 x1010

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Dr. Jodi M. DeLucia..... 657-6383 x1023

District Clerk
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Assistant Superintendent for Business
Monica Kim LaClair.....657-6383 x 1030

Director of Pupil Personnel
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School Lunch Manager
Christine Downs.....657-6383 x2181

Director of Facilities and Operations
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