# LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

### **DEAR ONTEORA COMMUNITY,**

I want to thank you for all of the support that we have received during these challenging times. As we make plans for our upcoming school year, we are grappling with all of the unknowns that are a part of that process.

We look forward to welcoming our students back into our buildings as soon as possible. We have been purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE) and creating protocols so that we can resume in-person instruction in a safe and effective manner. Although we will be providing remote instruction only for the month of September, we remain hopeful that we will be able to resume in-person learning for those who have chosen it in October.

Our administrators have been working diligently to support our students, families, and staff, and I am so proud to be a part of such a dedicated and skilled team. As we move forward, please reach out to us with any questions or concerns you may have. No one has ever been through this situation before, so everyone involved has valuable input. We try to think through and analyze every potential scenario, but our families are experiencing things differently than we are, so your feedback is always welcome.

CONTINUED ON

PAGE 3

# A Fond Farewell to the Class of 2020

IT WAS A MEMORABLE END TO AN UNFORGETTABLE SENIOR YEAR. Onteora celebrated the graduation of the Class of 2020 with a two-part event that was truly moving: a car procession that traveled throughout the District, preceded by a ceremony that was broadcast over Radio Woodstock. As the graduates and their families drove through the District's



Graduating student Samantha Berryann walks along the line of cars participating in the High School's caravan-style graduation procession.

various towns and hamlets, onlookers showed their support by whooping and waving, honking and applauding.

During her Salutatorian remarks, Ellery Loeheide encouraged her classmates to embrace change rather than mourn all the things they had missed due to the pandemic and extended school closure. "Make a change in the world, whatever that may mean to you, and be a part of something significant," she urged. "We are living through historic times, and we cannot miss our chance to do something great."

"We really don't know anything, and we probably won't for a while," Ellery continued. "But I think that's so exciting. It means that there is something to look forward to."

Looking ahead, Valedictorian Emily Salem said that the students would be taking different paths and experiencing different day-to-day realities. "As exciting and new as it is, moving forward doesn't mean we're starting over," she suggested. "For as much as we have shaped Onteora, it has shaped us, and we are graduating from here with more to show than just our diplomas."

Emily pointed out that wherever the graduates wind up, they will know that they share a community that truly cares for them. "We have watched alumni, teachers, guidance counselors, staff, administration, parents, and peers make this clearer than ever over the past few months," she said.

MORE HIGH SCHOOL
GRADUATION PHOTOS
ON PAGES 4 & 5

# ONTEOR

## **Capital Project Update**

ALTHOUGH OUR SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN CLOSED FOR MONTHS, OUR CAMPUSES HAVE BEEN BUSTLING WITH ACTIVITY.

Work on the Capital Project, which was approved by voters as part of the 2019-2020 budget, has been proceeding full speed ahead. When students and staff return to school, they will be greeted by safer, more accessible buildings.

### **Bennett Roof**

At Bennett Elementary School, the re-roofing process is nearing completion. The old roofing has been removed, and workers have installed a new plywood underlayment, a roofing membrane system, and new roof drains. The old roof, which dated to 1999, had exceeded its useful life and had been leaking. Work on the roof is expected to be finished by the start of school.

## Varsity Field Hockey/Baseball Field

Improvements are being made that will make the playing field safer for athletes and spectators. The baseball infield area will be re-graded and restored. Poor drainage areas are being addressed through the installation of new piping. A deteriorated 24" storm drain pipe that crossed under the baseball field has been replaced. A deteriorated and insecure backstop and infield fencing are being replaced. A new underground electrical line has been installed for the scoreboard, which is being relocated from behind a dugout to make it easier for spectators to see it. Newer, safer bleachers are being installed.

"It is exciting to see the major improvements to our field and athletic facility as a whole," said Kim Pilla, Onteora's Director of Athletics, Physical Education, and Health and Dean of Students. "The specific improvements with our drainage will enable our student athletes to maximize the utilization of the fields. Over the years, the fields would not properly drain, creating circumstances where our athletes would miss out on opportunities for practice time and game play. These improvements were necessary as we continue to improve our athletic program."

### **Improving Accessibility**

Much progress has been made in improving accessibility at the High School/Middle School, which is a major goal of the Capital Project. The High School gymnasium now has new concrete stairs and a wheelchair ramp that is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Two locker rooms in the High School gymnasium have been renovated to make them more accessible to all students. Six bathrooms in the High School/Middle School have also been renovated. The bathrooms, some of which were more than a half-century old, had doors that were too narrow to accommodate wheelchairs, and curbs in the locker rooms and shower rooms had prevented easy access for students with limited mobility. The Middle School locker rooms and additional bathrooms in the High School and Middle School will be renovated next summer.



One of the bathrooms being renovated at the High School/Middle School

After renovations are complete, the locker rooms at the High School/Middle School will be more accessible to all students.





The women's restroom in the High School gym lobby is also being renovated.

Onteora Director of Facilities Kyle Harjes (right) consults with Patrick Bowden (left) and Stephon Bartholomew (center) from **BBL** Construction Services regarding the renovations being carried out in the Fitness Center at the High School/ Middle School.





Insecure fencing on the Varsity Field Hockey/Baseball field is being replaced.

The High School gymnasium's new wheelchair ramp will make the facility more accessible to people with limited mobility.



# NIEORA

# LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

### **CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

While families are making hard choices based on what is best for them, we want to support everyone as much as possible. We understand that no single choice is right or easy for every student and every family. This is an extremely challenging situation, which none of us had foreseen.

I am constantly amazed at the resilience and compassion that has been so evident among our community for the past five months. The Onteora community has come together and has supported each other in countless ways. I am so grateful, every day, to be a part of this amazing community. We will get through this together, and we will be stronger for it. Powerful bonds are forged in difficult situations.

I hope everyone is able to enjoy the remainder of the summer weather and spend time with loved ones.

Sincerely,

### Victoria McLaren

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

# WELCOME BACK!



The first day of school for students will be on Wednesday, September 9.
All students will be learning remotely during the month of September.

# WOODSTOCK SAYS "BYE-BYE" TO GRADE 3 STUDENTS

THERE WERE BUBBLES, BALLOONS, AND EVEN BARKING AT WOODSTOCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL'S "Third Grade Cruise Bye-Bye," a car caravan-style sendoff to students who will be

moving on to Bennett



School in the fall. Tank, the certified therapy dog owned by Onteora Occupational Therapist Michele Darling, arrived early on his owner's bright-red motor scooter, much to the delight of the "graduates," who cruised along the front driveway in their family vehicles. Onteora teachers



and staffers, many of them wearing the school's distinctive tie-dyed T-shirts, held signs, waved pinwheels, and played celebratory music while saying goodbye and good luck to youngsters they hadn't seen in person since March. The event, held on June 23, was an untraditional—but joyful—end to the students' Woodstock education!



Phoenicia teachers and staff members wave to students during an end-of-year

# **Phoenicia Students Celebrate School Year's End**

PHOENICIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL marked the end of the school year with a festive celebration on June 24. Students in Kindergarten through Grade 3 were invited to wear their school colors and help decorate their family vehicles for a drive-through visit to the school they hadn't set foot in for several months. Many students held signs they had made with special messages for their teachers, like "I Love You!" and "Have a Great Summer!" Lining the school's driveway and parking lot were teachers and staffers who waved pompoms, blew bubbles, played music, and held up posters and signs expressing heart-felt sentiments like "You Did It," "You're Moving Up," and "We Miss You!" Helping to lead the cheering sections were Principal Linda Sella and School Resource Officer Tom Sharon.



# Bennett Students are on the MOVE!



ongrats to Bennett School's Grade 6 students, whose achievements were recognized during a June 24 "Cruise-by Moving-Up Caravan." The students, who will be entering Middle School in the fall, were driven in their family vehicles past cheering staff members and student government officers, who distributed moving-up certificates, ice cream gift certificates, and lots of good wishes. There were balloons and bubbles, celebratory signs, and even live music (courtesy of Bennett's talented Music teachers). Waving from their cars, trucks, and vans, the soon-to-be seventh graders bid adieu to their teachers and their elementary school years.





## A Fond Farewell to the Class of 2020

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Onteora Superintendent Victoria McLaren praised the students for persevering through the pandemic to complete their high school educations. "During this time, you have shown yourselves to be adaptable, empathetic, generous, and gracious," she said. "You have collaborated in planning this graduation that is unlike any others, you have stepped up to tutor students who needed assistance, you have actively participated in your student government, you have donated to those families within your community that needed help.... We don't need to wonder what type of leaders you will become; we have watched you skillfully leading, and doing it with compassion."



Speaking of this year's commencement activities, High School Principal Lance Edelman declared, "I have said for years that Onteora has the best graduation ceremony in



the region. I truly believe that we lived up to this once again, despite the restrictions and barriers that we had to deal with."

The procession, he noted, highlighted the vast, and breathtakingly beautiful, area that the school district encompasses. He thanked everyone who participated and supported the event, including Radio Woodstock, administrators, faculty, staff, and the community at large. "Bringing the community together in such difficult times was needed on many levels," he said.

Several days prior to the official graduation, the students had the opportunity to pose for photos on a stage set up on the school's football field.

# Middle School Floral Tradition Gontinues Despite Pandemic

DURING THE MIDDLE SCHOOL
MOVING-UP CEREMONY, the "graduating"
students traditionally receive two flowers, one
red and one white. The red flower is theirs to
keep, and the white flower is to be presented to a
family member, friend, or staff member who had
helped them to succeed. This year, due to
the pandemic, Middle School teachers and
staffers drove to students' homes to present
them with the flowers as well as their moving-up
certificates. Everyone enjoyed the chance to say
goodbye face-to-face!



















# NTEORA

# New Chemistry Lab to Open at High School

THE HIGH SCHOOL'S STATE-OF-THE-ART CHEMISTRY LAB is on track to open by the start of the new school year. The brand-new learning space was created by completely renovating Room 203.

The new lab not only includes updated safety equipment, but will also provide a better instructional space and enhanced learning opportunities, says Superintendent Victoria McLaren. Among other features, the lab will include large monitors, mounted in the lab area, which will be connected to the teacher's work space. The monitors will allow the instructor to provide more guidance with students' lab work.

According to Chemistry and Robotics teacher Bryan Keenan, "The layout will improve the quantity and quality of the interactions with students."

The revamped classroom/lab includes many drawers, Mr. Keenan notes, which student lab groups can use to store equipment and lab reports. There are also numerous cabinets, which can be used for electronic balances, spectrophotometers, pH probes, thermocouples, gas pressure sensors, temperature probes, and other electronic chemistry devices. Robotics equipment and glassware could also be stored here, he adds.

The renovations also bring the space into compliance with current safety regulations. A new fume hood is being installed, along with modern heating and ventilation equipment. Outdated piping, wiring, and valves have been replaced. Unlike in the old classroom, faucets will be located a safe distance from electrical outlets.

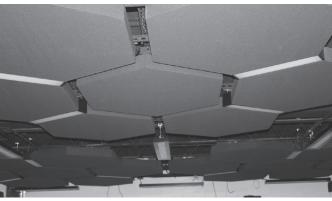
Funding for the project was included in the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 budgets. Onteora also took advantage of a \$50,000 grant from the Benjamin Center at SUNY New Paltz.



Director of
Facilities Kyle
Harjes (left)
and Assistant
Superintendent
for Business
Monica Kim
LaClair examining
plans for the new
Chemistry Lab.







A view of the soundabsorbing ceiling tiles in the new lab.

# HIGH SCHOOL INDUCTS 18 STUDENTS INTO NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY

ongratulations to the following High School students, who were inducted into Onteora's chapter of the National Honor Society (NHS) during an online ceremony held on June 10: Nelson DelTufo, Eva Donato, Joey Driscoll, Shayne Durkin, Sophia Frank, Analie Ingalsbe, Ava Maki, Citlalli Martinez Valentin, Jacqueline Melanson, Clara Mead, Ollie Milford, Tahlula Potter, Scarlette Ragues, Axel Roberts, Lucciana Robertson, Elijah Salazar Garris, Shane Stackpole, and Sophia Wentland.

During the ceremony,
Assistant Principal Dieter
Schimmelpfennig shared
some inspiring advice with
the new inductees. "The world
needs creators, educators,
and innovators, and you are
tomorrow's game changers,"
he declared. "So don't let
the doubts of others limit
you; don't give your fears the
power to inhibit you."

Mr. Schimmelpfennig also urged the students to strive to make a difference in the world. "Give back to your community — enrich each life in your vicinity, leave your indelible mark on history by creating it," he counseled.

The National Honor Society is more than just an honor roll, noted English teacher Laura Loheide, who coadvises the Onteora chapter with Sarah Turck, Onteora's Director of Guidance. "While qualification for the National Honor Society is predicated on academic scholarship. acceptance is based on the pillars of leadership, character, and service," she said. "As a member of the NHS, students are models of exemplary character and service to their school community."

# ONTEORA

## Lawn Signs Recognize Graduates, Scholarship Recipients

WORKING COLLABORATIVELY, High School administrators, the Onteora Teacher Association, and our School Resource Officer arranged for lawn signs honoring Onteora's Class of 2020. Teachers delivered the congratulatory signs to the homes of our graduating seniors.

Students who were awarded scholarships received an additional sign and were encouraged to attend a virtual Scholarship Award Ceremony on June 10. Thanks to the generosity of the Onteora community, our seniors received more than \$130,000 in scholarships this year.

Students were recognized in a wide range of areas, including music, art, business, sportsmanship, citizenship, community service, leadership, extracurricular activities, character, and academic excellence.

On behalf of the Onteora community, whose generosity makes these awards possible, we wish our graduates every success in their future endeavors!



Onteora senior Grace Hallinan is all smiles after receiving notification of her scholarship award.



Science teacher Bill Wall congratulating scholarship recipient Dylan Diehl.



## THEY'RE MOVING UP TO KINDERGARTEN!

nteora students enrolled in the Pre-K program administered by First Steps Preschool celebrated their upcoming move to Kindergarten with a festive—and gloriously noisy—end-of-year event. Fire engines and police cars, their lights flashing and sirens blaring, led a car parade through neighboring streets and the school's parking lot. The students, traveling in their own family vehicles,

waved to the cheering and applauding teachers, staffers, and well-wishers who lined the parade route. Serving as master of ceremonies was Uncle Rock, AKA



former Onteora Board member Robert Burke Warren, who played some of the children's favorite songs, including "The Garden Song" (by David Mallet) and Uncle Rock's original tune, "Hold it in My Heart" (Thank You Song). Adding to the fun was a playful clown, a slew of encouraging posters, and a bit of impromptu street dancing. The proceedings, which were broadcast live over a local radio station, ended with the presentation of moving-up certificates and a small gift. Best of luck in Kindergarten!



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## **ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT** Hannah Bush: Class of 2012

### HANNAH BUSH CREDITS HER ONTEORA ROOTS

with helping her to build a successful career in the field of Physical Education (PE). Her professional path has included work as an administrator, teacher, and coach.

An Onteora teacher sparked her interest in her chosen profession. "Michael Gallagher, my PE teacher at West Hurley, gave me a passion for sports and physical education," she said. "I remember playing a tagging game called Asteroids and Anklebiters, and the way he would count our warmups with his big, booming voice."

Bush's Grade 3 teacher, Sandra Perna, asked her students to interview an adult about their job; the youngster chose Mr. Gallagher. "The assignment changed my life, and from then on I have pursued PE and never changed my mind!" she said.

In High School, Bush shadowed Physical Education teacher Sonja Rothe as part of the school's Community Mentor Program. Also memorable were the physical education classes taught by Andrew Occhi, Deborah Cease, Eric Pezzello, and Jacob Hoyt-Friedman. "They taught some great PE!" she said.

In High School, Bush played Varsity Softball, Varsity Volleyball, and Varsity Indoor Track. During college, she competed on the Club Badminton team and played intramural sports.

During breaks from SUNY Cortland, where she earned a bachelor's degree in Physical Education, she



To Postal Customer

worked with Onteora PE teacher Matthew Ryan, which solidified her career

Today, Bush is a Middle School PE teacher in Manassas Park, Virginia, where she serves as an assistant athletic/ activities director for the District's Middle School and High School. In addition to

coaching High School Varsity Softball, she has coached track and basketball at the Middle School level. When her school was closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bush taught lessons online. "My students watched videos, kept fitness logs, and participated in online challenges," she said.

Bush's interests and areas of expertise range from karate to horseback riding, water sports to archery – and even oyster shucking. "I am a part-time professional oyster shucker and work for Nomini Bay Oyster Ranch," she noted. "I ranked sixth in the nation for female oyster shuckers at this year's national competition at the U.S. Oyster Festival in St. Mary's County in Maryland."

Bush sees similarities between Onteora and her current school district. Though larger than Onteora, her new school community has the same tight-knit feel. Like Onteora, she said, "Manassas Park is truly a family!"

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