

ONTEORA

Winter 2021

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

DEAR ONTEORA COMMUNITY,

As I write this letter, I am eagerly anticipating the return of students to our school buildings. By the time you read this, students participating in our in-person learning model will have already returned to their classrooms.

It is my hope that going forward, we will be able to keep our schools and classrooms open as consistently as possible. We watched as some Districts that returned to in-person learning during the month of January experienced building closures due to quarantines, but thus far, these closures have been more of the exception than the rule. This gives us hope that we will also be able to keep our buildings open for in-person learning.

We have asked our families and our staff to provide us with consent to participate in COVID-19 screening testing in anticipation of Ulster County being designated as a micro-cluster zone. We have no clear indication of when or if that designation might happen, but in order to plan, we need to know if we would have the appropriate number of individuals willing to participate in the screening. This information allows us to plan for our future as we continue to watch this pandemic and its evolving impacts on education.

Although this year has been a year unlike any other, our students continue to achieve and shine. Among their many notable achievements are the High School student newspaper, *The Talon*, and Onteora's literary magazine, *The Reservoir*. The student newspaper can be found on the High School website at this link: <https://ohs.onteora.k12.ny.us/clubs/school-newspaper-the-talon>.

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MUSIC AND MENTORSHIP: Onteora Program Helps Students Make Music, Pursue Passions

ONTEORA HIGH SCHOOL'S COMMUNITY MENTOR PROGRAM

offers students in Grades 9-12 the opportunity to pursue their interests and passions – and perhaps their “dream” careers – with the guidance of community-based professionals.

A passion for music inspired Onteora senior Analie Ingalsbe to participate in a songwriting and performance mentorship last year. She was paired with Donna Lewis, a Bearsville-based recording artist and songwriter.

Although the mentorship officially concluded last May, it is continuing to pay artistic dividends. Analie's song “Modern Love,” which she wrote during her mentorship, was a winner in the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) All-State 2020 songwriting category.

A second song, “Touch,” which Analie co-wrote with fellow Onteora musician Archie Lewis-Harris, was selected for the finals of the Electronic Music Composition Showcase for NYSSMA's Cyber Summit, which was held in December.

“Touch” also earned an Honorable Mention in the first-ever National Association for Music Education (NAfME) Student Songwriters Competition.

Analie considers herself very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with Ms. Lewis, whose song “I Love You Always Forever” reached the top-10 on the singles charts in nine countries, including the United States.

“Working with Donna was such an incredible experience,” Analie enthused. “She really helped me to consider other options when I was in the process of writing a song – to think about what other directions I could take the song in and see if they were worth exploring.”

Ms. Lewis, explained Analie, was a constant source of inspiration. “I go through phases where I just can't write, and that's totally fine – as many successful musicians will say, you can't force inspiration,” she said. “But when I would go over to her studio, I never really felt a lack of inspiration.”

For her part, Ms. Lewis is thrilled with Analie's accomplishments. “I absolutely love it when one of my mentees is chosen for the NYSSMA All-State Composer/Songwriter Honor Concert,” she said. “Last year my mentee Sophia Grinberg was chosen, and now Analie Ingalsbe has been selected. I love our school for having such an amazing mentorship program!”



Onteora senior Analie Ingalsbe working on a song at the piano of her Community Mentor, Bearsville-based recording artist and songwriter Donna Lewis.
Photo courtesy of Donna Lewis

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MUSIC AND MENTORSHIP: Onteora Program Helps Students Make Music, Pursue Passions

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Onteora musician Archie Lewis-Harris co-wrote the song “Touch” with his classmate Analie Ingalsbe. The song was selected for the finals of the Electronic Music Composition Showcase for NYSSMA’s Cyber Summit and also earned an Honorable Mention in the first-ever National Association for Music Education Student Songwriters Competition. *Photo courtesy of Donna Lewis*

“Modern Love,” which Analie said was primarily written in her bathroom at home (because of that room’s superior acoustics), benefited not only from Ms. Lewis’s creative input, but also from Onteora Board of Education member Kevin Salem’s impressive musical skills. “We went over to his studio, and he recorded a beautiful guitar track for the song!” Analie said.

Collaborating with Archie, who is Ms. Lewis’s son, was another highlight of her mentorship, said Analie. “Unfortunately, the timing to work with Archie happened to be during COVID, so I didn’t really get a chance to work with him in person,” she explained. “However, he made an entire electronic track for my song ‘Touch,’ and it’s amazing! He’s extremely talented!”

Archie is also an alumnus of Onteora’s Community Mentor Program, having completed a mentorship in film scoring in 2018 with David Torn, a film composer, recording artist, and producer who lives in Bearsville.

Analie’s mentorship has strengthened her resolve to pursue her passion for music. “I plan to continue writing songs,” she said. “In fact, I plan on majoring in songwriting. It’s my hope for it to be my career!”

It’s Time to Register for Kindergarten!

If you have a child who will be eligible to enroll in Kindergarten in the Onteora Central School District next September, it’s time to register your child. The District’s online Kindergarten registration system is now open.

To register online, parents or guardians should go to www.onteora.k12.ny.us and click on “Registration & Displaced Families.” The link for online registration is in the middle of the page. Please be sure to choose the 2021-2022 school year.

Children who turn five on or before December 1, 2021 are eligible to enroll in Kindergarten beginning in September 2021.

If you have any questions, you may contact Sharon Wood, Onteora’s District Registrar, by calling 845-657-6383 ext. 1023 or emailing swood@onteora.k12.ny.us.

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

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The depth and breadth of subject matter and the high level of writing in these two publications are a tribute to the hard work and dedication of the students. Much of the content rivals or surpasses what I have seen in professional publications.

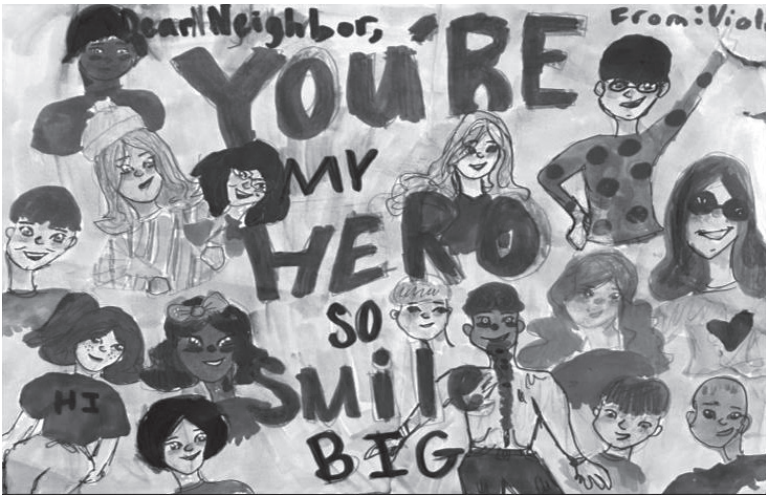
We are also anticipating a return to athletics for our secondary students based on the Governor’s recent announcement that he has approved high risk sports to proceed, pending approval of the local Department of Health for each District.

At the elementary schools, we have seen really creative instruction at all levels. During the holidays, our Bennett Elementary School musicians created incredible videos showing that even a pandemic cannot stop our talented students from sharing the joy of music. Onteora students always bring passion as well as dedication to all of their musical endeavors, which have the power to inspire and unite us all. Thanks to the hard work of our faculty and the assistance of a retiree, the community can watch our Bennett students perform by clicking on “news” at the bottom of the Bennett webpage: <https://bennett.onteora.k12.ny.us/>. There is a video of both the orchestra and the band to view.

Throughout this pandemic, I have been inspired by all of the caring that has been demonstrated across this community. Our students, staff, and families have shown boundless resilience and have supported each other in ways that are heartwarming and humbling to see. I look forward to seeing what hopeful news the spring may bring.

Sincerely,
Victoria McLaren
**SUPERINTENDENT OF
SCHOOLS**

Bennett Elementary School Students Spread Holiday Cheer



Student Violet Randall created the picture used as the cover of the holiday cards.

'TIS THE SEASON TO THINK OF OTHERS. That was the message being embraced by Grade 4 Bennett students in December. The youngsters used their creativity, technology skills, and positive attitudes to make holiday cards for neighbors residing at the Northeast Center for Rehabilitation and Brain Injury in Lake Katrine.

The card-making project was the idea of teacher Elizabeth Lefferts, who enlisted the help of Teaching Assistant Cheryl Formont as well as members of the Grade 4 teaching team, including Adam LaFera, Elizabeth Corsitto, William Michella, Brigid Kelly, and James McLaughlin.

"I had been thinking about ways that our students might be able to practice thinking of others during this holiday season, knowing this past year has been a tough one in so many ways," she recalled. It can be a particularly lonely time for people residing in group living settings, she suggested, due to COVID-related concerns and restrictions.

Hearing from friends about a local initiative to donate holiday care package items to the Northeast Center, Mrs. Lefferts received permission to have student-made cards included in the parcels. She then asked her colleagues if they'd like to get their classes involved as well.

"Knowing the giving nature of the people I work with, I knew they would be interested," she said. "We decided this would be a great way for our kids to give back to the community!" The project would also incorporate important elements of the Grade 4 curriculum, including social and emotional learning (SEL) and New York State technology standards and goals.

Enriching the experience was a lesson Mrs. Lefferts and her colleagues had recently taught on "positive self-talk." Devised by the Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility, the lesson was a hit with the students. "We noticed a lot of the fourth graders transferring ideas and positive affirmations from that lesson into the encouraging messages they wrote in their cards," Mrs. Lefferts observed.

The project also allowed the students to continue to develop their technology skills, as they used Chrome Canvas and Google Slides to create and insert pictures. "The students had a great time designing the cards," said Mrs. Lefferts, who noted that each card featured a cover drawn by student Violet Randall. Inside the cards, the students added their own designs and personal messages. "Teachers and staff were really moved by the heartfelt messages the students wrote and the effort they put into the cards," Mrs. Lefferts said.

Safety was a priority throughout the project. All donated items were newly purchased, and the cards (approximately 275 in all) were made digitally to limit the amount of handling. As an added precaution, the care package items (including the cards) were placed in "quarantine" for an appropriate amount of time following their delivery to the Northeast Center.

In describing the collaborative endeavor, Mrs. Lefferts pointed to words spoken by School Counselor Candice Sosler during a recent social skills lesson: "Shared joy is double joy!" By doing something kind for someone else, Mrs. Lefferts explained, the students could not help but feel good about themselves. "It's a win-win situation, and I think we can all appreciate a little kindness—especially this year!" she said.

Bennett Principal Gabriel Buono was thrilled with the results. "This really was a team effort to bring joy to others!" he said.



Among those students sending holiday wishes to the Northeast Center was Angel Cruz.



Violet Randall using her Chromebook to create a digital card.



Teacher Elizabeth Lefferts assisting Oisin McDermott with his card.

Pandemic Prompts Phoenicia Teacher to Reimagine Field Trips

FIELD TRIPS—A MUCH-LOVED PART OF THE TRADITIONAL SCHOOL CALENDAR—ARE JUST ONE OF THE MANY THINGS THAT ARE DIFFICULT TO ARRANGE DURING A PANDEMIC.

At Phoenicia Elementary School, however, Grade 2 teacher Sharon McNerney has found a way to safely recreate the excitement and sense of discovery associated with field trips—despite the fact that all of her students this year have been learning remotely, in their own homes. (Phoenicia students also have the option of attending school in person.)

Ms. McNerney is accomplishing this feat by organizing virtual, real-time field trips, which her students are experiencing by logging on to their Chromebooks at the appointed times. “The field trips are live and on location, not pre-fab, pre-recorded perfection,” she explained. “It’s real life, in real time, with real people in our community!”

So far, her class has participated in four educational “expeditions.” The first virtual visit was to a pottery studio owned and operated by Doug and Pam Peltzman, professional artists whose son Leo is in Ms. McNerney’s class.

Leo and his family gave a tour of the Shokan studio, complete with hands-on demonstrations. The youngsters learned about pottery wheels, kilns, glazes, and much more. They also learned about how different



Grade 2 Phoenicia students in Sharon McNerney’s class enjoyed a virtual field trip to the Doug Peltzman Pottery Studio in Shokan. Pictured (from left to right) are Doug, Grayson, Leo, Arlo, and Pam Peltzman.

kinds of clay materials can be used to fashion useful and beautiful objects.

“Pam made a porcelain mug in front of our eyes on the wheel, explaining her techniques as she created it,” Ms. McNerney recalled. “It was a great way to bring art into our classroom and also to demonstrate that a job can be something you enjoy!”

During the second field trip, the students had the opportunity to “meet” a quarter horse named Dudley. Ms. McNerney’s daughter, Annie VanKleeck, gave the students a virtual tour of her Shokan barn, demonstrating how to tack up a horse for Western-style riding.

Ms. VanKleeck, who is studying to be a teacher, also talked about important safety measures (like wearing a helmet), as well as the daily tasks involved with horse ownership (including brushing, picking hooves, changing water, and mucking stalls).

The highlight of the equine-themed outing was when the students got to “ride” Dudley, courtesy of Ms. VanKleeck, who took the laptop up on the horse and rode around the paddock.

The field trips, which often attract parents and other family members, help to forge and strengthen ties within the class, within families, and with the community at large. “Community building is so important during the times we are living in,” suggested Ms. McNerney. “Real people in our community wanting to be with us, teach us, and spend quality time with us—it’s a great feeling!”

Learning and teaching via technology has its challenges, Ms. McNerney admits, but she is thankful for the support she and her students have received. “It has been absolutely heartwarming that everyone in our classroom community—parents, families, and students—have truly come together to help each other with tips, ideas, and sharing information on what worked and what didn’t in navigating our new learning venue,” she said.

The students have also enjoyed virtual tours of the Woodstock Highway Department and the Olivebridge studio of artist and teacher Kate McGloughlin.



Annie VanKleeck explained how to tack up her horse, Dudley, for Western riding.

Middle School Government is in Session!

STUDENT GOVERNMENT IS UP AND RUNNING AT ONTEORA MIDDLE SCHOOL (OMS) despite the logistical challenges posed by the pandemic. After a spirited election season this fall – featuring a slew of persuasive campaign posters – the following students were elected to represent their respective classes:

Grade 7: Connor Gierloff (Class Treasurer); Lucy Jennings (Class Secretary); Kaiya Kaehler-Chinnery (Vice President); and Ruby Gahagan (President).

Grade 8: Corbin Smith (Class Treasurer); Devon Hunt (Class Secretary), Olivia McHugh (Vice President), and Vincent Christofora (President).

“Voting was close in the contested races,” noted Student Government Advisor Michael Rushford, who offered congratulations to all of the candidates. Other members of this year’s Student Government team are Jaelyn Ostling, HaileyJade Frisenda, Coco Asada, and Charlee Kennoch.

“Our overall goal is to improve student morale and to guide students through this challenging academic year with some enjoyable activities,” Mr. Rushford continued. “Our next order of business is developing some trivia contests and a virtual game that the students can take part in.”

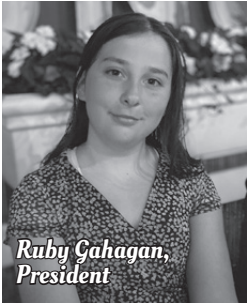
The Student Government has already lifted their classmates’ spirits by helping to secure a sweet donation from Stewart’s Shops. The Ballston Spa location provided coupons for a free scoop of ice cream for every Middle School student, and three local Stewart’s Shops helped with the logistics involved in making sure that OMS students could easily pick up their treats during the week of January 11-15.

In December, the Middle School’s student representatives met with the High School’s student representatives for a virtual meeting. The student representatives have been responsible for bringing about a number of exciting changes and activities at the Middle and High Schools, including the creation of outdoor classrooms, more widespread distribution of feminine hygiene products, and holiday letters being sent to community members residing in assisted living facilities.

The members of the Middle School Government are looking forward to serving their fellow students. “I really like hearing and sharing ideas that will help us to improve our school,” said Grade 7 Class President Ruby Gahagan. “I think we will be able to help encourage students and get a lot done this year.”

Grade 8 Class Vice President Olivia McHugh is similarly enthusiastic. “I am very ecstatic for the new year and excited for the upcoming projects!” she said.

GRADE 7



Ruby Gahagan,
President



Kaiya Kaehler-Chinnery,
Vice President



Connor Gierloff,
Class Treasurer



Lucy Jennings,
Class Secretary

GRADE 8



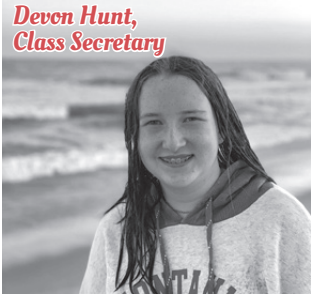
Vincent Christofora,
President



Olivia McHugh,
Vice President



Corbin Smith,
Class Treasurer



Devon Hunt,
Class Secretary

WOODSTOCK ARTISTS CREATE WOODEN ANIMAL SCULPTURES

The pivot to distance learning didn't stop the creativity of Woodstock Elementary School artists. Art teacher Roberta Ziemba asked her students to create sculptures of animals from pieces of scrap wood, and the results were amazing!

“They enjoyed the process and the opportunity to be creative at home,” said Ms. Ziemba, who prepared bags of scrap wood for each student. Families were then invited to pick up the materials at the school.

The pandemic has challenged not only educators, but also students and their caregivers, Ms. Ziemba noted. “I would like to acknowledge and thank all the families out there who are working so hard to support the arts and creativity in their child's life,” she said. “I am sure many of you had to sweep up sawdust from the wood scraps. The children are enjoying creating with wood, and it is clear that it is possible because of our willingness to work as a community during this difficult time!”



Grade 3 student Elise Yannucci Fitzer creating a long-necked animal from wood scraps.



New Art Teacher Spurring Creativity at Woodstock and Phoenicia Schools

THERE'S A NEW FACE AT WOODSTOCK AND PHOENICIA THIS YEAR. Falyn Dutcher, a recent

Art Education graduate from SUNY New Paltz, began teaching art classes at the two elementary schools this fall.

Although this is her first year at Onteora, Miss Dutcher is not new to teaching. For nearly three years, she has taught basic and advanced photography to students in Grades 3-8 at the Newburgh Armory Unity Center's Saturday Morning Enrichment Program. Last year, she taught art remotely at Taft and Little Britain Elementary Schools (in the Washingtonville Central School District). As a student teacher, she taught high school students at Newburgh Free Academy.



Phoenicia Grade 2 student Leo Peltzman drew this fanciful feline.

So far this year, her students have worked on a drawing unit as well as a collage unit. They have also been making use of materials found at home, creating animals out of paper plates, for example, and color wheels out of objects like kitchen supplies and stones from their personal rock collections.

Speaking of her teaching philosophy, Miss Dutcher said, "I believe that art is a personal experience for young artists, and that they should have the freedom to create however they can with whatever they have. They especially enjoy taking inspiration from current games and toys that they see and play with."

She feels a responsibility towards her students, whose creativity, she says, continually amazes her. "Ultimately I am one of their first interactions with art at their young ages, and I hope to help each student find an early appreciation for the art world and all of its mediums," she concluded.



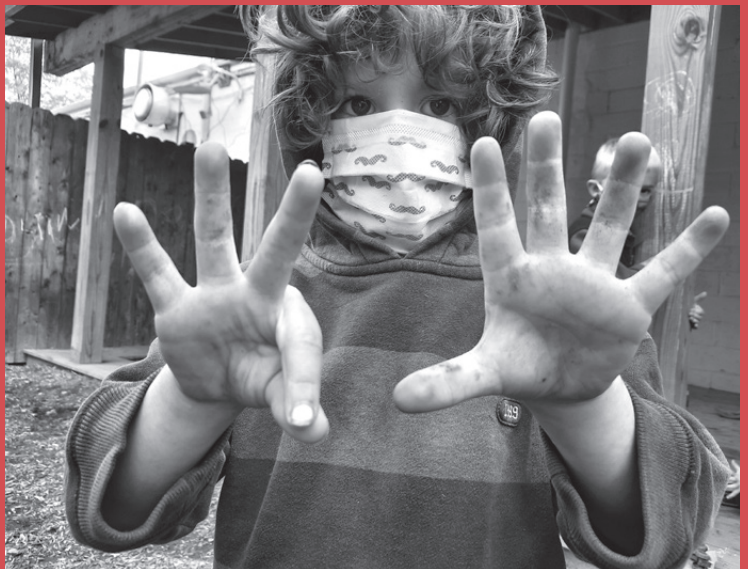
Art teacher Falyn Dutcher joined the Onteora staff in the fall.

PRE-K APPLICATIONS BEING ACCEPTED

If you live in the Onteora Central School District and have a child turning four by December 1, 2021, you're invited to apply online for the District's Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) program for the 2021-2022 school year.

To register online, parents or guardians should go to www.onteora.k12.ny.us and click on "Registration & Displaced Families." The link for online registration is in the middle of the page. Please be sure to choose the 2021-2022 school year. UPK online registration forms must be completed by May 21, 2021. (Enrollment will not be verified until after May 21.)

When your child is registered, their name will be added to a list from which the UPK students will be chosen. Onteora's full-day Universal Pre-K enrollment is based on need. Students who receive Special Education supports, those eligible for free/reduced lunch, and/or those who are English Language Learners will be enrolled first. All other children will be chosen randomly by lottery for the District's full-day or half-day programs.



Onteora Pre-K students enjoy outdoor learning. Pictured is Jasper Bailey, who attends the program administered by Woodland Playhouse.

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Book Deliveries Help Keep Students Reading!

THIS WINTER, ONTEORA'S TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT has periodically delivered gifts of new and gently used books to the homes of Onteora students in Grades K-6. The deliveries have been distributing donations from the District's ongoing book drive, which was spearheaded by Reading Specialist Julie McCarthy.

The Lisa Libraries (<https://lisalibraries.org/>) contributed 300 new books to the effort, which also received donations from Onteora families, employees, and community members.

Among those assisting were local libraries, PTAs, and District staff (including members of the Building and Grounds Department, who helped move donated items between buildings).



Transportation staff member Jennifer Hasbrouck preparing to deliver donated books to students' homes.



Library Media Specialist Bernadette Amodeo, Reading Specialist Julie McCarthy, and Reading Specialist Kristina Countryman helping to sort books during the District's ongoing book drive.

Thanks are also due to Stewart's Shops, which awarded a \$4,500 grant to be used to order even more child-friendly reading material! We're also grateful to Liz Potter of the Phoenicia Library for securing the grant, and for working with Onteora elementary school teachers to create a list of books to be ordered.

A huge thank-you to everyone who is pitching in to help keep our students reading! Book donation boxes are located in front of each elementary school building.

BENNETT GRADE 4 STUDENTS HAVE HEART!



Bennett students helped spread holiday cheer at the Ulster County SPCA, which provides temporary shelter, medical treatment, and adoption opportunities for abused, neglected, and homeless animals. In addition to raising \$150 for the non-profit organization, the students created custom-made cards for some of the adoption-worthy animals being sheltered by the organization. Bennett Grade 4 teachers Elizabeth Corsitto (above left) and Adam LaFera (above center) delivered the donations to the SPCA on December 19. Also pictured is shelter resident Princess (above right). Photos courtesy of Ulster County SPCA

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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Victoria McLaren

NEWSLETTER EDITING & DESIGN

Ulster BOCES Community Relations



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To Postal Customer



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT
Pat Knight
CLASS OF 1959

PAT KNIGHT IS CERTAINLY NO STRANGER TO ONTEORA'S KITCHENS, CAFETERIAS, AND DELICIOUS MEALS. As a student, she enjoyed many school lunches in the current High School/Middle School building, back when it welcomed students in Kindergarten through Grade 12. As an adult, she has built a successful, lengthy career with the District's Food Services Department.

Several years after graduating, Ms. Knight was hired as a Substitute Food Worker. She landed a full-time job as a Food Services Helper in May of 1964. For the next 17 years, she worked in the kitchen as well as at the cash register.

In September 1981, she was promoted to Cook Manager, a position with many responsibilities. "I order food for all the schools, I count all the money, and I prepare all the department's bills for payment," she explained. "I also still enjoy working as a cashier!"

Ms. Knight's work ethic has not gone unnoticed by her colleagues. "I've never seen anyone more dedicated to the school or her job," said her supervisor, School Lunch Manager Christine Downs.

Ms. Knight has seen many changes in the Food Services Department since the days when her mother and aunt both worked there. "My mother worked as a cook

for 30 years!" she observed.

"Back then, almost all of the food was prepared on the site," Ms. Knight recalled. "Every day we would have fabulous homemade chocolate cake and peanut butter cookies."

Today, she noted, Onteora makes its own delicious soups from scratch, including Cream of Turkey, Lentil, and Italian Wedding, as well as special dishes like Chickpea Stew, Southwest Veggie Bowl, and Chili.

One of the best things about her job, Ms. Knight says, are the people. "I really enjoy my co-workers and the students," she said.

During the pandemic, Ms. Knight and her fellow Food Services staff members have continued to make school breakfasts and lunches. Twice-weekly meal pickups have allowed students to continue to enjoy healthy meals, even when school buildings have been closed to in-person learning. (All students are eligible for free meals this year, per the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the New York State Education Department.)

While Ms. Knight thoroughly enjoys her job, she looks forward to a time when the schools – and the cafeterias – are full of students once again. "I'm really looking forward to things getting back to normal and seeing all the students," she said.

"I've never
seen anyone
more dedicated
to the school
or her job."

—School Lunch Manager
Christine Downs

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IF YOU KNOW OF AN ONTEORA GRADUATE WHOM YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE SPOTLIGHTED, CONTACT IMAGINE ONTEORA AT IMAGINEONTEORA@GMAIL.COM.

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www.onteora.k12.ny.us

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PHOENICIA ELEMENTARY • 688-5580
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