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Public Hearing on Budget

Tuesday, May 13

Senior High School Media Center
7 p.m.

Budget Vote & Board of Education Election

Tuesday, May 20

6 a.m. – 9 p.m.

School Budget Anticipated to Stay at Cap

The Saugerties Central School District Board of Education once again plans to keep the coming year's tax levy increase within the state-mandated cap.

"The tax levy increase we're working on is 1.72 percent," Superintendent of Schools Seth Turner said in late March, about two weeks before the Board was scheduled to adopt the 2014-15 budget proposal.

The tax levy, which is the amount of the budget funded through local taxes, is capped to a "maximum allowable" amount for each district as a result of legislation passed in 2011. Each district's maximum allowable levy is calculated using an eight-step process that involves the Consumer Price Index (CPI), Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs), and other factors.

Superintendent Turner said the major expenses driving the budget are much the same as in past years: contractual and legally mandated costs such as health insurance costs and contributions to the Teachers Retirement System (TRS) and Employee Retirement System (ERS). He noted, however, that while health insurance costs

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Saugerties

School District

SPRING 2014

'Flipped' Classrooms

SHS Math Teacher Uses New Technique to Meet Students' Needs

When Saugerties High School math teacher Jen Sauer launched an innovative teaching method earlier this school year, she wasn't trying to reinvent the classroom, just flip it a little.

Sauer, a 10-year veteran teacher, has been using what's called a "flipped" or "inverted" classroom in all three sections of her Algebra 2/Trigonometry course since last fall. In a flipped learning environment, homework and traditional lectures trade places. Students are introduced to new material by watching a short online video lecture as homework, then practice and master the new concepts in class, with their teacher there to provide help and individual instruction. A common practice in the humanities for years, the flipped classroom has been gaining ground in math and science in the last decade.

Sauer first heard of flipping a classroom in passing several years ago, before cell phones and home Internet access became

ubiquitous. Last summer, when she felt confident that the widespread use of mobile technology would now make it feasible to flip her own classrooms, she attended a professional development course in flip-

ping through the Creative Teacher Education Institute.

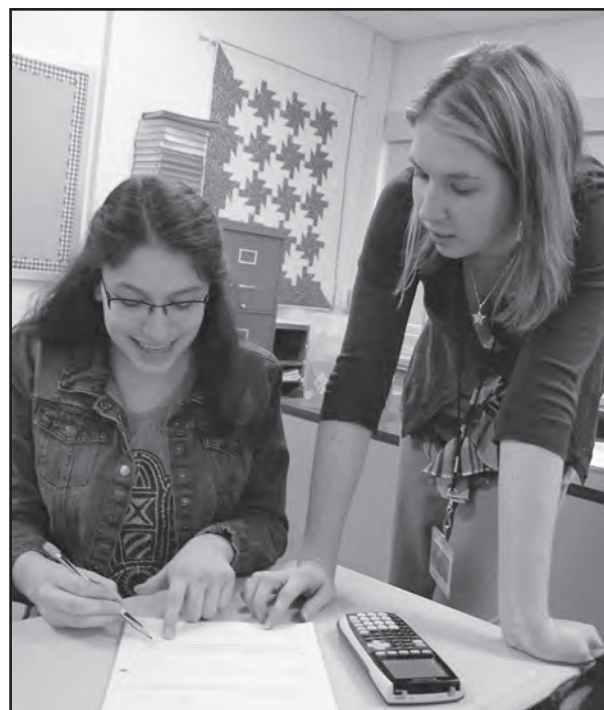
"My biggest reason for doing it was that I would send kids home with homework and if they made a mistake, they would reinforce the wrong method," Sauer said.

So she started using her prep period to create short videos – most about 10 minutes long – using a free online recording program called Screencast-O-Matic. She posts them to YouTube, where students can watch them on a desktop computer, tablet, or cell phone.

"It works really well. It helps," said Dan Caffrey, one of Sauer's Grade 10 advanced math students. "It's a little more interesting than reading a textbook."

Besides, he notes, having lectures posted to the Internet is handy since "I'm there anyway."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Saugerties High School student Megan Wright discusses a math problem with Algebra 2/Trigonometry teacher Jen Sauer during a "flipped" lesson.

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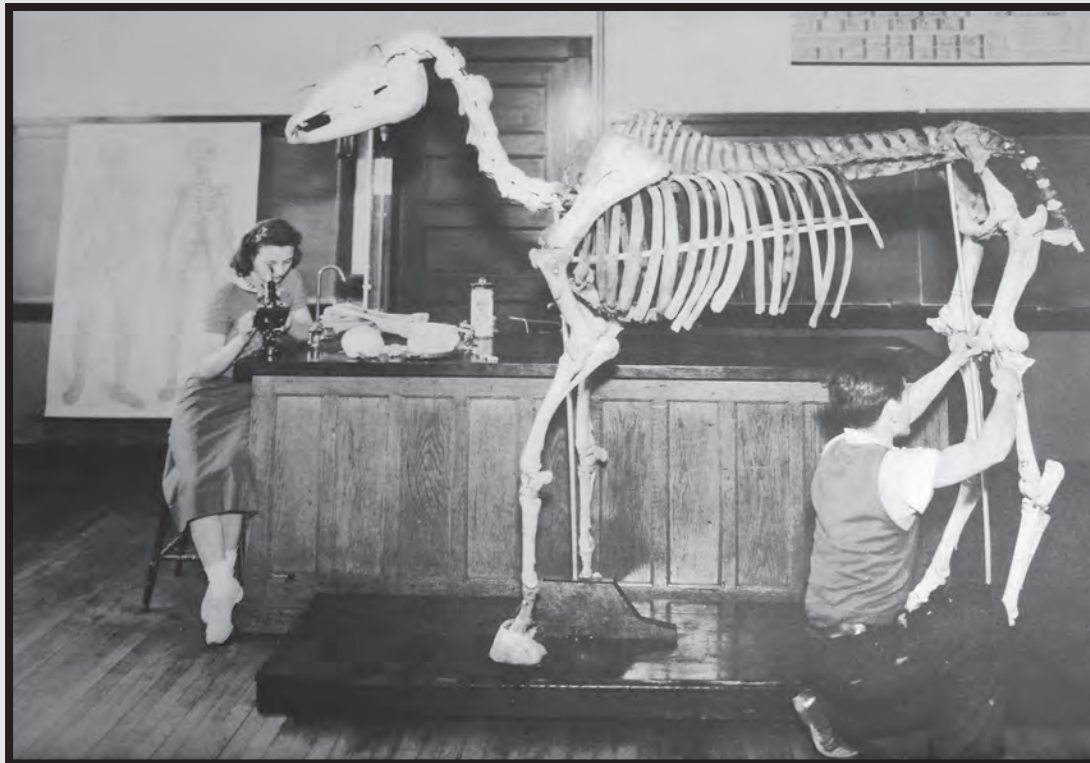
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TO RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER

Yesteryear's News**COMMON CORE, 1930S STYLE**

Learning standards for science have changed a bit since these two Saugerties High School students were in the classroom during the 1937-38 school year. A horse is still a horse, of course, but labs are definitely more modern and better equipped these days. Note the Periodic Table of the Elements on the wall at right, too. When this picture was taken, 29 elements, including Plutonium, had yet to be discovered.

The lab in which the students are so diligently working was located in the old Saugerties High School building, which is now Cahill Elementary School, named after SHS teacher and coach Lawrence Cahill. The picture was published in the 1938 Sawyer yearbook.

School Budget**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

are still rising, new contracts have recently been settled with all four of the District's bargaining units in which changes in employee contributions to health insurance were negotiated that will offset some of the District's expenses in coming years.

Among other considerations in the development of the 2014-15 budget are an anticipated decrease in enrollment at the Junior High School this fall and the need to change the design of the school's programs to accommodate fewer students.

Superintendent Turner said the District will continue to focus on building the infrastructure needed for implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and technology, while maintaining existing programs and being mindful of the impact of federal, state, and local decisions.

"The Board's priority was to develop a budget that continues to offer the programs and services we have for the benefit of the students and that the community can support," Superintendent Turner said.

The Board of Education will hold a public hearing on the budget on Tuesday, May 13 at 7 p.m. in the Senior High School Media Center. The annual budget vote and Board of Education election will be held Tuesday, May 20 from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.

More information about the budget will be shared in the coming weeks and the community will receive full details in the budget newsletter prior to the vote.

SHS Math Teacher Uses New Technique to Meet Students' Needs**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

Although Sauer started flipping to help reinforce proper methods, it has had unexpected side benefits, too. It frees up class time for more quizzes to check for student understanding. Students can pause their video homework, replay parts of it, or even re-watch the entire segment. And with every lesson available 24 hours a day, they can review all class material before an exam.

Sauer said she thinks of flipping as a tool to help students learn and she currently flips about 75 percent of her lessons. During class time, she works through a series of problems with the students, walking between the rows of desks answering questions and helping those who are having trouble. Because the students are divided into groups, lots of peer teaching takes place, too.

Megan Wright, a Grade 10 advanced math student, said the group work can be helpful to students who might have been too shy or embarrassed to ask a question on their own. It also helps students learn at their own pace.

Sauer's students have pretty much flipped for flipping.



Saugerties High School math teacher Jen Sauer works with student Michael Livermore during a "flipped" lesson in her Algebra 2/Trigonometry class.

"The old way, when Ms. Sauer would explain something, it was sometimes hard to pay attention because of class distractions," said Grade 11 student Richard Martino. Now, Martino says, he can pause and replay lessons as often as he likes, with no distractions at all.

Sauer said the flipped classroom concept has benefited all her students, from those who were already engaged to those who have struggled in the past.

"This is the only way I've found to meet some students' needs," she said.

With the Common Core Learning Standards for

Algebra 2 and Trigonometry set to take effect in two years, Sauer plans to keep right on flipping next year.

"Before, if there was something you didn't understand, you were pretty much stuck," said Grade 10 advanced student Evelin Agar, describing the drawbacks of trying to do traditional homework. "This way, you can come in and ask the teacher for help. It's a lot easier."

Farming, Reading, and Healthy Eating

Senator Serves up Agriculture Literacy Lesson at Mt. Marion



Sen. Cecilia Tkaczyk chats with Corbyn Velano.



Students in Liz Nevil's Grade 1 class at Mt. Marion Elementary School join with New York State Senator Cecilia Tkaczyk in showing off their homemade versions of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Choose MyPlate healthy eating guide.



Sen. Tkaczyk and Ben Reynolds.



Sen. Tkaczyk and Giuliana Yonnetti.

Students in Liz Nevil's Grade 1 class at Mt. Marion Elementary School celebrated National Agriculture Literacy Week March 21 with a visit from a celebrity reader, New York State Senator Cecilia Tkaczyk.

Sen. Tkaczyk, herself a farmer, read Tom Darbyshire's *Who Grew My Soup?* to help educate students about where their food comes from.

She also talked with the students about the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Choose MyPlate initiative, which encourages kids to make healthy food choices. To reinforce the lesson, Sen. Tkaczyk joined with the students in filling paper plates with colorful drawings of fruits, veggies, whole grains, and lean protein and dairy products.

Commissioner King Impressed by Saugerties Students, Staff

New York State Commissioner of Education Dr. John King got a chance to see Saugerties education in action during a visit to the District on March 18.

During his three-hour stay, Dr. King observed classroom instruction in Grades 3 and 4 at Grant D. Morse Elementary School, as well as a Grade 7 English and Grade 8 Math class at Saugerties Junior High School.

While at Morse, Dr. King sat down for a one-on-one interview with Grade 6 student Craig Laurey for the student-run "Morse Beat" television program. During the interview, the Commissioner urged students to read and spend time in the library, practice their math, and be curious about the world.

Before returning to Albany, Dr. King met with student government leaders, PTA officers, Board of Education members, administra-

tors, and District teachers for a question-and-answer session in the High School library. Superintendent of Schools Seth Turner said the students "absolutely stole the show" at the Q&A.

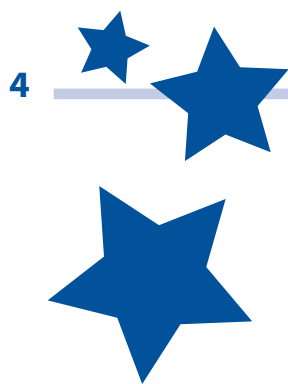
"Our students were outstanding," Turner said. "The questions they asked about the roll-out of Common Core, the impact on learning, the value of homework, the shifts in curriculum, etc., were spot-on."

Dr. King, who later Tweeted a link to a video of the Morse Beat interview, praised Saugerties students and staff alike, calling the kids "really impressive" and adding, "It is clear your principals and teachers are working hard to ensure students are gaining the skills they will need to succeed in college, careers, and life."



New York State Commissioner of Education Dr. John King prepares to be interviewed by Craig Laurey, a Grade 6 student at Grant D. Morse Elementary School in Saugerties.

Engineer's Week Helps Saugerties Students Touch the Stars



KIDS AT WORK

Mt. Marion students Chris Zehnick (left) and Blake Friedman assemble part of their Ping-Pong ball launcher.



Grade 4 students at Grant D. Morse Elementary School put their heads together over their Engineer's Week bridge-building project.



Grant D. Morse Elementary School students Paul Croce (left), Robert Moon, and Molly Reynolds assemble their marshmallow and drinking straw bridge during Engineer's Week.



Mt. Marion Elementary School Grade 6 students practice launching their Ping-Pong ball during Engineer's Week. From left are Mya Riley, Billie Wells, Sarah Stephens, and Makayla Hanley.

Saugerties elementary school students have big dreams for the future—dreams of bendable phones, future-telling machines, and self-driving, water-powered cars.

Those dreams and dozens of others got a chance to grow during Engineer's Week activities in March. A nationwide initiative sponsored by IBM, Engineer's Week brings real-life scientists into elementary school classrooms to show kids how cool engineering can be.

"It exposes students to what engineering is all about and maybe one or two are sitting there thinking, 'That's what I want to do when I get older,'" said Steve Wehr, an IBM software engineer who has been working with Mt. Marion Elementary School students for Engineer's Week for more than a decade.

The highlight of the engineers' visits is a hands-on project that challenges students to use their science, engineering, technology, and math (STEM) skills.

Referencing the recent winter Olympics, Wehr gave Grade 6 students in Char Frasse's class an aerodynamics project similar to a ski jump, asking them to find a way to launch a Ping-Pong ball as far as they could, using only rubber bands, paper clips, tape, notebook paper, and paper plates. Like real engineers, they had to "pay" for their materials and stay within a budget of \$200, which wasn't much considering that most of



Grant D. Morse Elementary School Grade 4 students Emma Hallion (left) and Hannah Mills watch with equal parts excitement and nervousness as their Engineer's Week bridge project is tested.

the supplies sold for \$20 apiece.

"Use your imagination," Wehr told the students. "Do a lot of thinking and drawing."

In the end, Team Russia, comprised of Taylor Jordan, Blake Friedman, Chris Zehnick, and Kane Losurdo, launched their Ping-Pong ball eight feet using a slingshot-like device made of paper clips and rubber bands.

Blake later said that the best part was "sling-shotting the ball." Inspired by Wehr's slideshow of emerging technology, Blake, who aspires to be a mechanical

engineer, said he would like to see bendable phones at some time in the future.

At Grant D. Morse Elementary School, Grade 4 students became young civil engineers, building bridges using spaghetti, drinking straws, tape, and marshmallows with the guidance of engineers Mike MacIsaac and Mike DeAngelis. They were required to create a design on paper and complete all the math calculations involved in buying materials.

Students and engineers alike enjoyed Engineer's Week activities.

"We love it. The kids love it. It's a good time," said DeAngelis.

Student Peyton Rose put it another way when her team's straw and tape bridge managed to support a cup with 209 pennies in it.

"I feel so awesome, like I could touch the stars," she said.

Morse Students Use Science to Snare Leprechauns



Grade 4 student Brynn Fisher demonstrates her leprechaun trap to students Caitlyn Rafferty, Sophia Hackett, and Katie Zicot.



Grade 4 student Tyler Hommel, right, demonstrates his leprechaun trap for Devin Watt, Jaden Incalcatera, and Dominic Gonzalez.

Using recycled materials and enough imagination to fill a pot o' gold, Grade 4 students at Grant D. Morse Elementary School celebrated National Engineer's Month and St. Patrick's Day simultaneously with their annual Leprechaun Trap Museum.

The culmination of a month-long science unit on simple machines, the museum offered a colorful display of devices so creative they would make real-life scientists turn green with envy.

To help the students grasp the Common Core-required concepts of force and motion and how they're created by objects like wheels, levers, and pulleys, Grade 4 teachers Rebecca Mulford and Denise Dudzic asked students to make posters about simple machines and then seek out some everyday ones in a scavenger hunt around the school. To end the unit, the students were charged with using at least four simple machines in a device that would capture unwary leprechauns.

Using everything from thread spools, pinwheels, and water bottles to fishing gear, LEGOs, and pliers, the young engineers created traps that were as unique as the colors of the rainbow.

"It ties in with the Common Core but it's great that they get to express that creativity. It's not just pen and paper."

~ Morse Teacher
Rebecca Mulford

Student Ginger Defino created an intricate mechanism that eventually launched the leprechaun from a Styrofoam platform, with someone standing nearby to catch it in a goldfish net. Karissa Heiss appealed to the leprechaun's natural playfulness, tempting him to try out a see-saw that triggered a bucket to come down on top of him.

"It's a fun project," said Mulford, who explained that students were urged to use recycled materials and families were encouraged to get involved in making the traps. Students were also asked to write an essay that explained how their trap worked.

Family, friends, and students in other grades were invited to view the traps in the school cafeteria, and the event proved to be more popular than a four-leaf clover.

"I liked seeing all the cool things and how they worked," Grade 1 student Zachary Feinberg said after his trip through the exhibit. Asked if he thought any of the traps could really

work, he replied, "A few of them, I bet they would."

When he reaches Grade 4 in a few years, Zachary hopes to make his own trap out of wood because, he says, it's "super strong."

Mulford said the project was a hit because it's something every child can do.

"It ties in with the Common Core but it's great that they get to express that creativity," she said. "It's not just pen and paper."

PARP

Riccardi Read-a-thon Rocks PARP Kickoff

Except for the whisper of turning pages, classrooms at Charles M. Riccardi Elementary School were silent on the morning of January 24 as all 325 students got lost in books.

The school-wide read-a-thon kicked off the annual Parents as Reading Partners (PARP) program. A PTA-sponsored initiative, PARP invites families to read together for 15 minutes each night, with a goal of improving both relationships and critical English Language Arts (ELA) skills that students are tested on annually beginning in Grade 3. The PTA also provides incentives to students to meet their reading goals throughout the course of the program.

Dressed in pajamas and curled up on soft blankets, students in Dana Murphy's Kindergarten class absorbed new vocabulary and built other Common Core ELA skills while exploring colorful books about trucks, penguins, and snow.

Students in the higher grades showed their knowledge about books in general, easily discerning between fiction and non-fiction during an assembly with children's book author Helene Sola. A Hudson Valley resident, Sola read aloud her book, *Loo Loo and the Fabulous Marvelous RexxaRoo*, and fielded questions from the students about her creative process and the challenges of publishing a book. About half the youngsters said they might someday want to write books themselves.

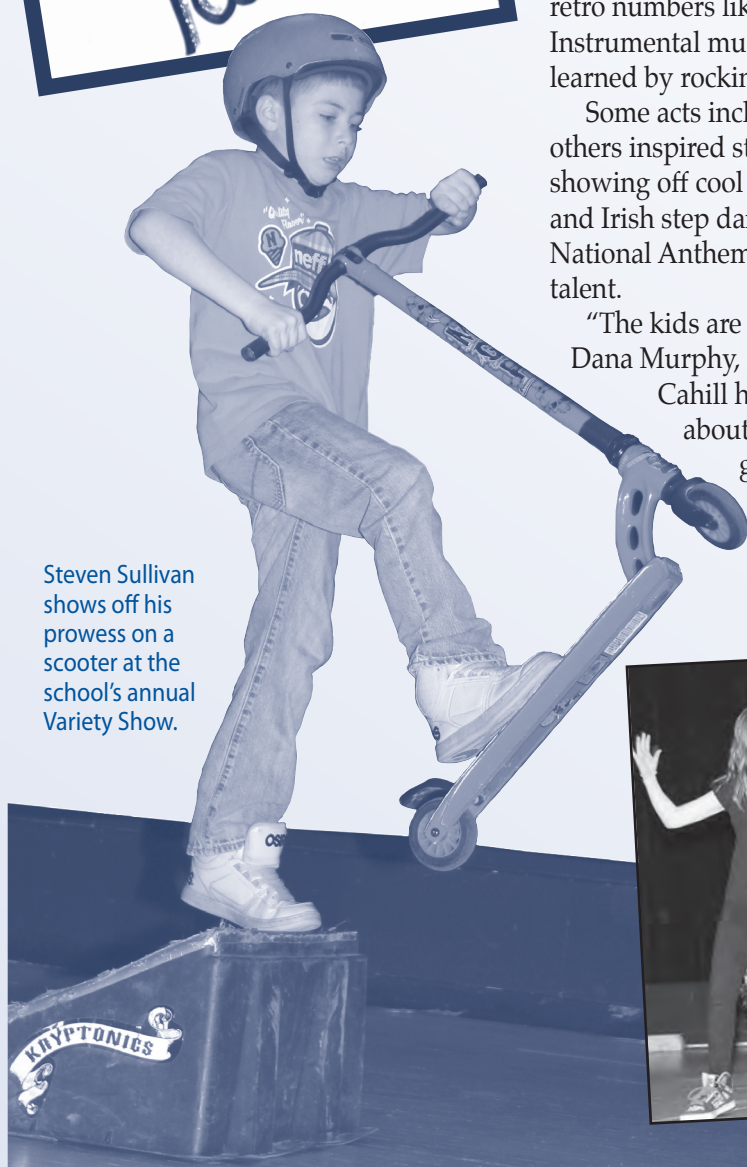
Sola praised the students for all the time they had spent reading already that day as part of their PARP kickoff. "I think every school should have a read-a-thon," she said.

PARP lasted for a month at Riccardi and included a variety of activities based on this year's theme, "Dive into a New Adventure."

Kindergarten student Katie Cushman reads a book about penguins during the school-wide read-a-thon.



Kindergarten students William Pettit (left), Marco Bocchimuzzo (center), and Louis Costello share the books they read during the school-wide read-a-thon.



Steven Sullivan shows off his prowess on a scooter at the school's annual Variety Show.

Cahill Elementary School students built confidence and poise while simultaneously entertaining family and friends at the school's Variety Show on March 21.

The show, an annual event that showcases student talent, featured kids in Grades K-6 performing in nearly three dozen acts. The show offered something for everyone, especially lots of lively music. Dressed in everything from pink frills to imitation Village People costumes, students had the audience clapping to current hits like Katy Perry's "Firework" as well as retro numbers like "We Go Together" from the musical *Grease*. Instrumental music students also showed how much they've learned by rocking out in solos on the drums and guitar.

Some acts included anti-bullying messages, while others inspired students to get physically active by showing off cool moves in gymnastics, skateboarding, and Irish step dancing. From the Macarena to the National Anthem, Cahill students proved they've got talent.

"The kids are fabulous," said Cahill PTA president Dana Murphy, who organized the show.

Cahill has been hosting the Variety Show for about four years and Murphy said it's a great opportunity for kids to shine, learn how to present themselves on stage, and gain confidence.



Antonio Tucillo entertains audiences at the Variety Show with a guitar solo.



Emma Maxwell performs a song at the Variety Show.



Alexa Macek, Emelia Horvath, and Kaitlyn Haberski perform a musical number at the Variety Show.



Ahmya Valdez performs a song during the school's Variety Show.

SPELLERS SHOW SMARTS AT ANNUAL DISTRICT-WIDE BEE

Although Caroline Johansen didn't have to spell the word "illustrious" at the Saugerties District-wide spelling bee, it certainly describes her and the skills that won her a seat at the regional bee in Schenectady.

Caroline, a Grade 4 student at Morse Elementary School, was crowned the top speller in the Saugerties School District in a 10-round bee held January 13 at the High School library. The event featured seven spellers in Grades 4 through 6 from all four elementary schools as well as four spellers from Grades 7 and 8 at the Junior High School. The elementary school students, who won their classroom and school competitions, also took part in an elementary bee in December. The junior high school students were all winners of their class contests.



Caroline Johansen is the Saugerties spelling champion for 2013-14.

Participating from the elementary schools were: Caroline Johansen, Asmir Ayaz, and Liam Curtis of Morse; Mia Bourguignon of Mt. Marion; Austin Buley and Sophia Kamrass of Cahill; and Ilana Numssen of Riccardi. Spelling on behalf of Saugerties Junior High School were Grade 8 student Erica Helmedach and Grade 7 students Rebecca Naccarato, John Skiff, and Grace Tytus.

The students proved that they had prepared well for the competition, facing down challenging words like "glutinous" and "aphasia" without batting an eye. Second place finisher Mia Bourguignon, a Grade 5 Mt. Marion student who also qualified for the regional bee, breezed right through "anthropomorphic," while Liam Curtis not only properly capitalized the "P" in "Pavlovian," but also politely

remembered to use another "P" word – "please" – when asking the judges for a definition. In addition to her spelling skills, Caroline also demonstrated her compassion when she reached out to hug her long-time friend Sophia Kamrass when "stethoscope" took Sophia out of the running.

Teaching assistant Theresa Costello, who organized the bee, said of all the students, "It's a big deal for them to reach this level. It shows they have a certain academic talent."



Mia Bourguignon, a Grade 5 student at Mt. Marion Elementary School, was the runner-up in the spelling bee.

Saugerties Elementary Schools Raise \$11,000 for American Heart Association

Students' pulses were pounding at three Saugerties Elementary schools in February, and it wasn't because of valentines and puppy love. Jump Rope for Heart events at Cahill, Riccardi, and Mt. Marion schools raised both heart rates and money, providing healthy activities for kids and more than \$11,000 for the American Heart Association (AHA).

Cahill and Mt. Marion have hosted Jump Rope for Heart annually for several years. Riccardi joined the fun and fundraising this year at the suggestion of Principal Sue Osterhoudt, who felt it would be a good service project for the student government that was formed in September.

At Riccardi and Mt. Marion, students rotated to different stations and enjoyed Hula Hoops, Skip-Its, Hoppity-Hops, resistance bands, and, of course, jump ropes.

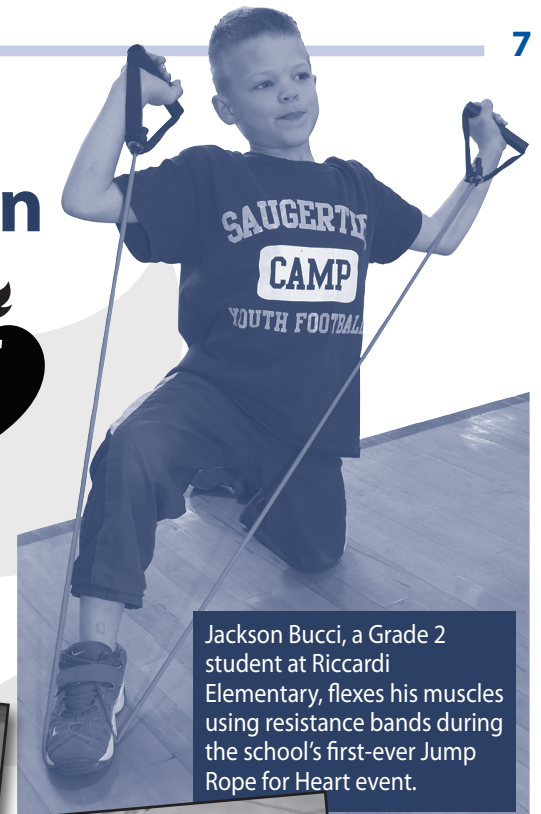
"They love it because in their minds they're playing," said Riccardi physical education teacher Ted Suttmeier.

Far more than just fun and games, however, the activities provided a workout for both minds and muscles. At Riccardi, each station featured posters with health information that included diagrams of the heart and muscular system. Suttmeier even snuck in a lesson on the basics of biology by using red and purple Hula Hoops to represent how the color of blood changes depending on its oxygen level. At the end of the period, Suttmeier taught the students how to take their pulses.

At Cahill, students skipped rope, jumped low hurdles, and bounced on pogo sticks in a gymnasium filled with red and white balloons and heart-pumping music. Members of the student council helped out with each station, keeping younger kids safe as they jumped, hopped, skipped, and ran.

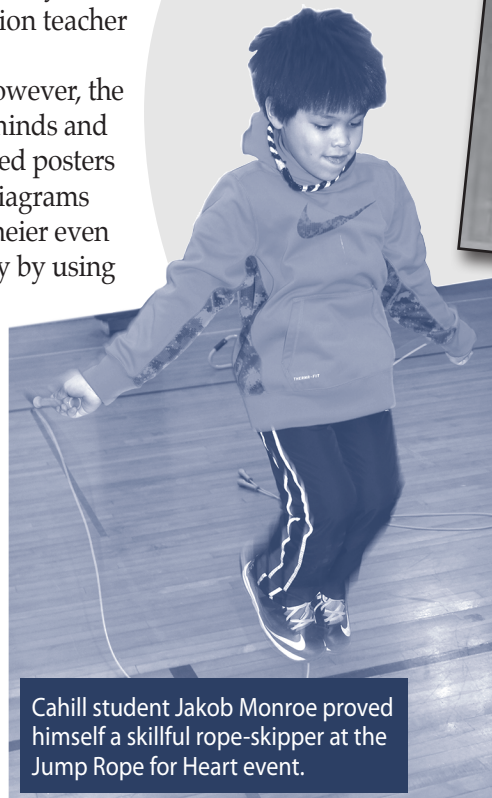
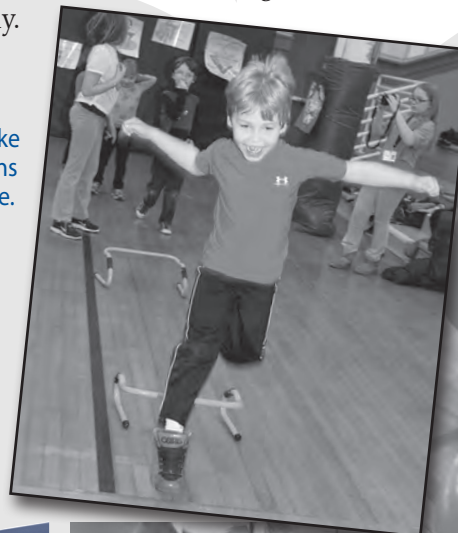
After their physical activity, students at all three schools enjoyed a healthy snack.

The money raised was collected through pledges students gathered from family and friends and will be used to fund research and help heart attack survivors. As a thank-you gift from the AHA, each of the schools will receive a gift certificate to purchase equipment for its gymnasium. Cahill, which raised more than \$6,000, will receive \$300. Riccardi raised more than \$3,000 and Mt. Marion collected more than \$2,000. They will receive \$200 and \$100 gift certificates, respectively.



Jackson Bucci, a Grade 2 student at Riccardi Elementary, flexes his muscles using resistance bands during the school's first-ever Jump Rope for Heart event.

Cahill student Blake Mignano-Campbell runs through the hurdle course.



Cahill student Jakob Monroe proved himself a skillful rope-skipper at the Jump Rope for Heart event.

Riccardi Grade 2 student Gabrielle Papa is all smiles while using a Hoppity-Hop during Jump Rope for Heart activities.



Students at Cahill Elementary School leap into the air while playing Skip-It during Jump Rope for Heart activities. From left: Fiona Bassi-Gardner, Mikaylay Murphy, Anna Gramoglia, Madison Whittaker, and Sienna Silipo.



The participants in the Saugerties district-wide spelling bee pose with their certificates.

Caroline, meanwhile, says she never dreamed she would win. An avid dancer who studies ballet and tap and also enjoys sports, Caroline devoted some time every day to preparing for the competition. By the weekend before the bee, she had progressed to practicing words according to their ethnic origin.

"I was studying Slavic words, Arabian words," she said.

Mia used a computer program that helped her make quick work of words like "lucrative" and "schism." In the end, she was tripped up by "honcho."

"I was thinking s-h-o-w at the end," said Mia, who is a cheerleader and also enjoys swimming.

Morse Principal Don Dieckmann said he was "elated" that Caroline qualified to take part in the regional bee.

"As a principal, I couldn't be prouder," he said. "We had great representation from all the students."

Caroline's mother, Heather Johansen, agreed.

"It's fabulous," she said. "I'm so happy for Caroline and all the students."

As representatives of Saugerties, Caroline and Mia were among only a small number of Ulster County students who attended the regional spelling bee. Highland and Marlboro were the only other districts in the county sending spellers to the event, which took place in February at Proctor's Theatre in Schenectady.



Saugerties Junior High School Presents *Aladdin Jr.*

The Saugerties Junior High School (SJHS) drama club chased away the winter blues with its upbeat, colorful production of Disney's *Aladdin Jr.* recently.

Based on the 1992 animated Disney film, *Aladdin Jr.* transported theatre-goers to the fictional city of Agrabah, where a "street rat" falls in love with a sultan's daughter after discovering a genie inside a magic lamp who transforms him into a prince. The show was filled with familiar, upbeat songs like "Whole New World," written by lyricists Tim Rice, Howard Ashman, and Alan Menken.

The 45-member Saugerties Junior High School cast rehearsed several days a week from September to February, learning songs and choreography along with their lines.

Theresa Hogan, a Social Studies teacher at SJHS, directed the show, which she chose because the students were likely to be familiar with it, having watched the film version countless times as children.

Hogan double-cast the lead roles of Aladdin, Jasmine, and the Genie, so students in both Grade 7 and Grade 8 could have a chance to shine. Starring in the leads for Grade 7 were Max Martinez as

Aladdin, Rebecca Sauer as Jasmine, and Jaea Kleinberg as the Genie. The Grade 8 leading roles were filled by Brandon Salmi as Aladdin, Julie

Raleigh as Jasmine, and Kira Daniels as the Genie.

"It's awesome," Jaea said of her part. "I'm pretty much like this in real life. I'm very sassy and make jokes all the time."

For Kira, the role of the Genie is a nice change.

"I usually play bitter old

men," she said, describing her most recent role as a football coach in last year's SJHS show, *Peter Panic*.

Hogan said the students coped well with a rehearsal schedule disrupted numerous times by snow days.

"They've done a great job individually, learning their lines at home," she said.

While they've studied their scripts and rehearsed, the students also learned skills like cooperation, patience, and focus, Hogan said.

"Everyone put a lot of hard work into it and they had fun while they were doing it," said Julie.



Grade 7 students Max Martinez as Aladdin, Rebecca Sauer as Jasmine, and Courtney Klauser (center) as the magic carpet rehearse a scene from *Aladdin Jr.*

The cast of *Aladdin Jr.* at Saugerties Junior High School.



SHS's James Bethel Takes Third Place in State Wrestling Championship

When James Bethel was a little boy growing up in the Bahamas, he had no idea that the sport of wrestling even existed.

Now District 9 Wrestler of the Year, the nationally ranked Saugerties High School (SHS) senior placed third at the New York State High School Wrestling Championships in Albany in March. His only defeat of the season was to the wrestler who won the championship.

"He was 40 and 0. That's unheard of," said SHS varsity wrestling coach Dom Zarrella. "He's developed a skill set unique for his weight class."

Bethel, who has been wrestling for Saugerties since Grade 7, emigrated to the United States from the tiny island nation of the Bahamas when he was still in elementary school. He took up wrestling to relieve stress and help him cope with life's frustrations.

"When you're wrestling, it's just you, the person you're wrestling, and the mat," says 17-year-old Bethel, who competes in the 220-pound weight class.

As of late February, he had enjoyed 89 career wins.

"I'm excited that I might be able to get to 100," he said.

Whether he reaches that goal or not, his 40 victories this season alone break the previous Sawyer record of 38 set by 2012 grad Ethan Stanley, now a midshipman and grappler at the U.S. Naval Academy.

Bethel advanced to the state competition after winning the Section IX championship in February.

While a sectional winner and state contender in the high school wrestling form called "folk-style," Bethel also trains in free-style and Greco-Roman wrestling during the off season. In Greco-Roman, he placed third in the nation in his



Saugerties High School senior James Bethel, right, spars during a practice this spring.

weight class in the national championships in Fargo, North Dakota, last summer.

"In the past two years, his development has skyrocketed," said Zarrella, who commended Bethel for his "total dedication to the sport."

"He's the kind of kid you root for," Zarrella said, adding that Bethel is "one of those genuinely nice kids. He's always got a smile on his face. Everyone likes him."

While talented on the mat and popular among his teammates, Bethel can also hold his own in the classroom.

He has a knack for science and is interested in a career in engineering.

"Some college is going to really like the fact that they're getting James," Zarrella said.