

# CommunityLink

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## HAT'S OFF!

On June 26th, 508 White Plains High School students walked across the stage at the Westchester County Center to collect their diplomas. Principal Ellen Doherty addressed the graduates, offering one last piece of advice: **“You will have opportunities every day, no matter where you are or who you’re with, to do the best thing, to choose to be kind, to be aware of the influence you command and what you mean to the people around you. Use your influence wisely.”**

Valedictorian Ross Von Doren, who will attend the University of Michigan’s Ross School of Business in the fall, advised his classmates to take chances in order to make a difference. **“Risks lead to new discovery, to new technology and new resources. Don’t hesitate. Don’t wait to see if someone else does it first.”**

Salutatorian Gabriella Alexandrou encouraged fellow graduates to embrace what makes them different and unique, and then make the most of it. **“Strive to be authentic, not desperate to be popular.”** Alexandrou will attend Cornell University in the fall, with a double major in biological sciences and economics.

## MOVIN' ON UP

Earlier on the same day, 555 Highland Middle School eighth graders took part in their own student-centered ceremony at the County Center. Students from each team – Regina Tucker, Johnny Zevallos-Vila, Kalsoom Rashid, Pilar Ceron and Diana Jimenez-Flores – offered greetings, Kristal Symonds led the Pledge of Allegiance, and Pilar Ceron offered reflections about middle school. The choir sang the national anthem and the chorus and jazz band performed a musical medley.

**“We’ve had two years to really observe how uniquely talented these students are, and we’ve done our best to help them become lifelong learners,”** said Highlands Principal Ernie Spatafore. **“We know they are well prepared to face the challenges of high school.”**



Salutatorian Gabriella Alexandrou and Valedictorian Ross Von Doren



Tim Connors and Peter Bassano

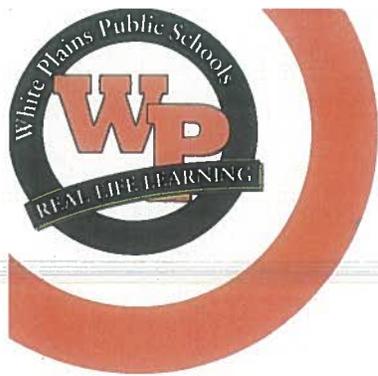
## Board Honors Connors & Bassano

Superintendent of Schools Tim Connors and Board Member Peter Bassano were honored at the June 8th Board of Education meeting for their contributions to the school district. Both are retiring on June 30th.

Mr. Connors is completing his ninth year in White Plains, having served as Superinten-

dent from 2002 to 2009 and then returning in July of 2013 for two years as Interim Superintendent. Board President Rosemarie Eller thanked him for his exceptional leadership of the district and for **“keeping us on an upward trajectory.”** She described

(cont'd on page 2)



## Connors & Bassano *(cont'd from page 1)*

him as “a mentor, advisor, problem-solver and a friend to all,” and said the entire community will miss him. She presented Mr. Connors with an engraved crystal bowl from the Board.

Mr. Bassano was first appointed to the Board of Education in August of 2002, to fill a vacated seat, and has served for 13 years. Mrs. Eller presented him with an engraved school bell and a Certificate of Appreciation from the Westchester-Putnam School Boards Association. A guiding force for

the Board, he said: “In my years on the Board, I have had the opportunity to work with some extraordinary educators and gifted leaders – both in our schools and in our community. I have also been privileged to witness firsthand how our schools transform the lives of the beautiful youngsters in our charge and I will be forever grateful for this marvelous opportunity.”

Both men were also recognized by the White Plains PTA Council and the White Plains Teachers’ Association, which is donating books to school libraries in their honor.

## School Budget Passes

The 2015-2016 school budget of \$205,800,000 was passed by the voters on May 19th with nearly 80% in favor. We are grateful to all of the members of the community, including parents and staff members, who provided valuable input during the budget process and voted to help us continue our tradition of high quality education. Thanks also to Fred Seiler, Assistant Superintendent for Business, for his hard work.

## Thank You For Your Service!

The Board of Education honored eighteen retirees and eighteen 25-year staff members at its June meeting. Board President Rosemarie Eller and Superintendent of Schools Tim Connors congratulated and thanked these staff members for their years of service to the students of White Plains. They presented certificates to the following:

### 25 Years of Service

Jane Bailey  
Roy Carroll  
Yun Jing Chow  
Paula Dalto  
Sonia Gordon  
Joan Haberman  
Wendy Heanue  
Mary Lincoln  
Clyde Mallary  
Lillian McClain  
Beverly Paonessa  
Linda Gale Pandolfo  
Nancy Perdeu  
Kathryn Petruzello-  
Dawson  
Stephanie Rosally-  
Kaplan  
Charles Sincerbeaux  
Shari Streichler  
Lourdes Yannuzzi

### Retirees

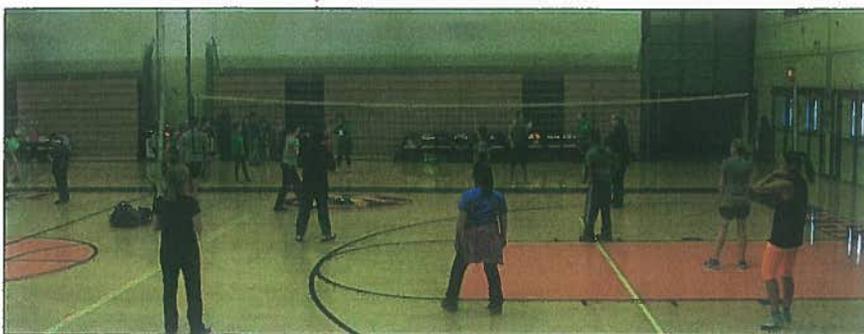
Deborah Amorosa  
Mitchell Barnett  
Brigida Carazo  
Margaret Cavanagh  
Jennifer DeSena  
John Fitzsimmons  
Clyde Mallary  
John McGee  
Narcita Medina  
Elizabeth O’Brien-  
McKeon  
Linda Gale Pandolfo  
Juan Pareja  
JoAnn Pettinato  
Gloria Redlener  
Mary Reilly  
Angela Sciortino  
Carol Renee  
Timberlake-Brown  
Peter Wood

## New Board of Ed Member

James Hricay and Rose Lovitch were re-elected to the Board of Education on May 19th and Cayne Letizia was elected to a three-year term starting July 1st. A seasoned educator, Letizia was a first and third grade teacher in New York City, a Reading Specialist and Grant Coordinator in the Yonkers City School District and is currently a Reading Specialist at the Valhalla Middle School. A native of Mount Pleasant, Dr. Letizia lives in White Plains with his wife and their three children. Their eldest daughter attends Mamaroneck Avenue School, as will her younger brother who is entering kindergarten in September.



Cayne Letizia



## Fundraising Fun

Parents and Staff of Post Road School faced off in a friendly volleyball tournament in April to raise funds for 5th grade moving-up activities. Students, parents and staff, along with their families, came out to support the event and cheer on the players; some made signs and dressed up in Post Road spirit-wear. About 20 parents and 20 staff members played in two simultaneous games.

## 14,000 Free Books Distributed in May

The White Plains PTA Council hosted its 3rd Annual Free Book Celebration in May and gave away an estimated 14,000 books to students in the White Plains School District.

At the White Plains High School “mini” celebration on May 1st, 2,000 books were distributed in one hour. At the larger community event the next day, Mayor Tom Roach, Board of Education Member Sheryl Brady, the White Plains Public Library staff, and many student volunteers pitched in and helped the PTA distribute 11,000+ books to more than 1,000 people.

Cardon Furry, WPHS Class of 2016 President and student representative on the PTA Book Committee, secured donations from Penguin Books USA, Hachette Book Group, SOHO Books, The Princeton Review, and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

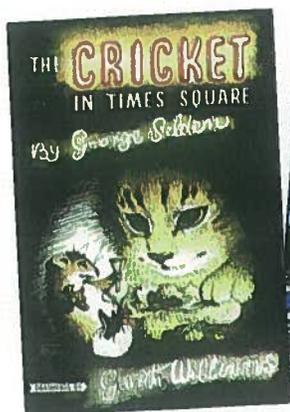
To see more pictures, visit [www.facebook.com/WhitePlainsPTAFreeBookCelebration](http://www.facebook.com/WhitePlainsPTAFreeBookCelebration)



## Church Street Bonds Through Reading

Each year, the Church Street PTA purchases a book for every child and staff member to read, to bring students, staff and families together as a community to foster a love of reading. A reading committee, made up of reading and classroom teachers and teaching assistants, develops a list of possible books and then polls staff to make a final decision. Copies of the book are sent home, including some in Spanish to the families who need them, and a chapter is assigned each evening. Students are asked questions during morning announcements by Mr. Stinchcomb and Ms. Castillo, the building

administrators, and vocabulary words are posted on bulletin boards as students read the chapters. Parents report excitement at home, with children eager to read with them each night, and asking to be quizzed in order to prepare for the Q&A sessions.

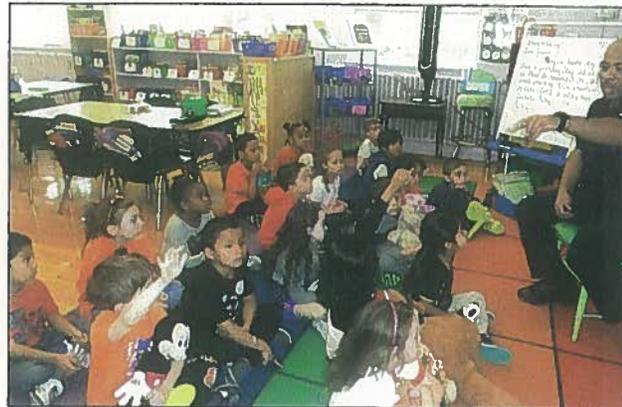


This year's "1 Book, 1 School" title was *The Cricket in Times Square*

## Focus on Health at MAS

Every student and staff member at Mamaroneck Avenue School enjoyed the 12th annual Health Fair in May. The full day event featured a wide variety of health- and wellness-related topics including heart health, bike safety, exercise, germs, and much more. Most of the sessions were interactive and many were led by individuals from the community — doctors, chiropractors, physical therapists, sports coaches, and police officers, as well as MAS staff. Action-packed fitness classes included Zumba, yoga, kickboxing, and Jump Rope for Heart.

The goal of the fair was to educate students about their physical, mental, emotional, and social health, and to encourage them to be proactive. Research shows that promoting and establishing healthy behaviors for younger people is more effective, and often easier, than efforts to change unhealthy behaviors already established in adults.



White Plains Police Officer Cheeks teaching students about "stranger danger"



Fourth grade teacher Robert Spedafino teaching students safe ways to exercise

The mission of the White Plains City School District is to educate and inspire all students, while nurturing their dreams, so they learn continually, think critically, pursue their aspirations and contribute to a diverse and dynamic world.



White Plains Public Schools  
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White Plains, NY 10605

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*Superintendent of Schools*

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Peter Bassano  
Sheryl Brady  
James F. Hricay  
Rose Lovitch  
Randy Stein

Postal Patron

[www.whiteplainspublicschools.org](http://www.whiteplainspublicschools.org)

## WPHS Guidance Team Recognized



PICTURED, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Rob Baddeley, Karen Day, Magda Martas, Allyson Winston, Genevieve Little, Alvera Pollard, Lesley Tompkins (Director of Guidance), Maria Csikortos, Denise Velasquez, Jeff Hirsch, Lily Diaz-Withers, Enrique Cafaro  
NOT PICTURED: Norm Silverman

The White Plains High School Guidance Department received the **Outstanding Program Award** from the Putnam/Northern Westchester BOCES College Clinic Committee at the 53rd

Annual College Clinic in April. Our counselors were honored as a result of the comprehensive series of evening presentations they provide for our families, encompassing all aspects of the college process including financial aid, the elements of the application, college for students with IEPs and 504s, athletics and the NCAA, standardized testing, and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Night. In addition, our guidance team presented programs on technical and trade schools, gap year programs and how to navigate the high school for freshmen and new students. Many of these programs were given simultaneously in Spanish. A total of 14 presentations were offered over the course of the school year, in addition to evening programs the counselors presented at Slater Center and El Centro Hispano.

Counselors volunteer their time to prepare and present these programs, to secure outside speakers who are experts on the topics and to develop materials. Many of the presentations had 100+ attendees.

## The Ridgeway Rainforest

The rainforest came to life for 10 days in June at Ridgeway Elementary School, where Cynthia Evans's third grade students were inspired to use their own free time and the simplest of supplies to create a beautiful educational exhibit to share with classmates.

**“The purpose was to see how we could pull from all disciplines – including social studies, science, math and reading – to create one project,”** said Ms. Evans.  
**“But for me, it was deeper than that. You start with just newspaper and masking tape, and look what you can create. It teaches a larger lesson about life.”**

The display took about two months to put together, following research and classroom work by the students, who acted as docents and honed their speaking and explanatory skills. Art teacher Linnea Westerberg and Visual Reasoning teacher Lauren Berrios assisted Ms. Evans and her students.

