

# CommunityLink

Winter 2018

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## Shakespeare Offers Districtwide Learning Opportunities

While many may be familiar with Shakespeare's plays as high school drama productions, some may not realize how the learning opportunities related to his work have been maximized throughout the White Plains School District.

All sixth graders participate in a Shakespeare project with artist-in-residence Wendy Baker, a director, playwright, performer, and educator. They practice stagecraft and drama techniques and prepare and perform scenes from two plays: *The Comedy of Errors* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Each student is assigned a role and must memorize lines, learn to block scenes (how to move, where to stand) and speak lines clearly and with enthusiasm. Performances are conducted for fellow classmates, parents, school officials, and community members.

There are countless benefits to the program. As students work with each other and determine the best way to present, they learn to listen and negotiate. This enhances their overall speaking and language skills and serves as a wonderful confidence-builder, especially for first-time public speakers. For most, it's their first exposure to Shakespeare

and his important influence on the English language, as well as a sneak peek into the world of theater and performance.

**“When we ask students beforehand what they think it will be like, they share that they are nervous,”** said Jennifer Hammond-King, Coordinator of English Language Arts, K-6. **“Afterward, they are excited and say they feel much better and much more confident.”**

For 7th and 8th graders at Highlands, critical thinking skills are enhanced as students are challenged to read through the eyes of a director and a performer. **“They need to understand the text and collaborate with one another to determine the best way to convey its meaning,”** said Doug Cronk, Coordinator of English, 7-12. **“A major goal is to really build on their ability to work together effectively.”**

At the high school level, the focus shifts to the use of language and building interpretive skills. No matter how long Shakespeare has been around or how many times his works are performed, there are key elements - like character motivation - that are subject to interpretation. This ambiguity and flexibility is a great learning opportunity! In the classroom, students work together to decide how scenes and characters will be presented and even how long-ago themes may relate to current events.

There are also opportunities for high school students to further explore Shakespeare through the Theater Club, which typically performs one of his plays every other year, in a Shakespeare elective course and through extra-curricular activities such as the English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Monologue Competition. In addition, the district has developed a relationship with the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, which sends a team of teaching artists and professional artists to work with students.

According to Debbie Hand, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Shakespeare really has it all when it comes to education and teachers in White Plains take excellent advantage. **“Shakespeare is timeless. The language is nuanced and challenging, and everything that goes into unraveling those layers - from first exposure to the more experienced reader - is exactly the kind of cognitively-engaging work that will help students meet and exceed rigorous standards.”**

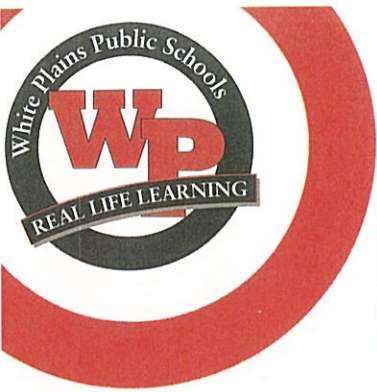


Superintendent Dr. Joseph Ricca participates in El Centro Hispano's Three Kings Celebration



High school students rehearse a scene from Shakespeare





## Students and Parents Share Excitement @ Family Tech Night

The third annual Family Technology Night, held at White Plains High School, allowed parents to learn about the tools that enhance learning in the district's schools and provided an opportunity for students at every academic level to share their excitement.

Organized by Lucy Roman, Coordinator of Instructional Technology, the event highlighted many online resources available to students and parents. Some of those included the vast catalog that the district maintains, including a collection of print and e-books for all grade levels. Programs reviewed included Destiny Library for secondary school students and TumbleBooks, Britannica School and World Book Kids, among others.

The real stars of the night were the students, who were eager to demonstrate what they've been learning. These highlights included Ridgeway 4th grade students of Math Enrichment Teacher Lisa Fillat, who showed how they use digital notebooks in their classrooms, and Highland's 7th and 8th

graders in the Robotics Club, who displayed their robot, named T-Bot, and a collection of miniature robots. The students programmed the robot to talk and perform various actions, such as a handshake.

Project Lead the Way is in its second year (at the elementary level) and Kathy Barpoulis, Coordinator of Mathematics for K-6, showed parents the scope of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) program for elementary school students. Students of Frances Carlo and Mary Kubat, who teach STEM in K-3, engaged in a number of hands-on activities as parents looked on.

Parents participated in an "Appy Hour" session, trying out many programs their children use on iPads and desktop computers. They also attended sessions on Internet safety, resources for parents and virtual reality field trips.

Superintendent Dr. Joseph Ricca noted technology's value as a tool for learning, but added that **"it's never going to replace the classroom experience. It is only as good as the user who is using it."**



## Airforce Veteran Expresses Appreciation for Eastview Salute

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph Ricca was pleased to receive a letter from Retired Airforce Veteran Jim Corrigan praising Eastview Middle School's Veterans Day Musical Salute in November.

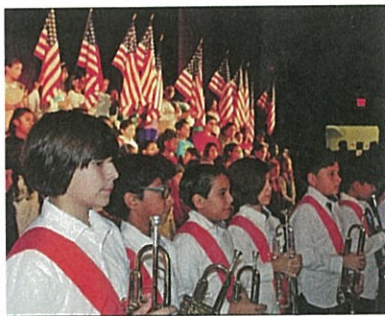
In his letter, Mr. Corrigan wrote: **"It was one of, if not the finest, Veterans Day services I have ever experienced. It was obvious that a lot of time and effort went into planning this superb program. Whether musicians, singers, flag bearers, oral presenters or hosts, the students were enthusiastic, respectful and highly proficient in their tasks."** He went on to say: **"The video tribute was especially touching to me when I saw three generations of veterans from my family on the screen."**

The hour-long program featured music, readings and a video montage honoring local heroes. The school's chorus, band and orchestra performed patriotic melodies for a full auditorium, with veterans from student and staff families as well as from White Plains veterans' organizations.

Veterans in the audience rose and saluted in a solemn moment when the band's trumpet section played "Taps." Several students spoke about the sacrifice veterans have made and explained why they are honored each November. They also mentioned the Adopt-a-Soldier Program, in which Eastview participates.

United States Navy veteran Vito Pinto, a former Westchester County Legislator, spoke to the gathering about the reality of war, referring to the bravery of veterans through the years, as well as those who served in other conflicts. **"Take a look around you,"** he said to the students. **"They and other veterans were just like you, from different religions, racial, socio-economic, cultural and educational backgrounds, and yes, immigrant families as well."**

The annual Veterans Day Musical Salute is arranged by Becky Hegenauer, Orchestra; Matthew Hommez, Chorus; Laura Mazziotti, Band; and Jody Kennedy.





## Living History at Ellis Island

A recent trip to Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty brought history to life for Highlands 8th graders. During their classroom unit on immigration, students learned about the “push and pull factors” that created a wave of immigration in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. Immigrants were pushed out of their own countries by war, famine and poverty and were pulled toward the United States for freedom, jobs and land. Letters, photographs and other documents illustrated that the experience was not what many immigrants expected. Visiting Ellis Island reinforced the students’ classroom work and deepened their understanding of the hopes and hardships of the people who passed through. They were able to visit the Great Hall and the medical room, to see artifacts and to look for names of ancestors posted on the monuments. They shared that they felt privileged to walk the same hallways so many immigrants had years ago.

Highlands 8th graders with Team Leader Joan Haberman at Ellis Island



## Talent on Display at Rochambeau

Creative students and staff have a chance to shine at Rochambeau’s quarterly Coffee House event where participants showcase their literary talents: poetry, the spoken word, essays, songs. About 70 attendees gather during lunch to listen and encourage the performers while enjoying hot chocolate and baked goods. It’s a wonderful opportunity for self-expression and a great way to practice public speaking skills!

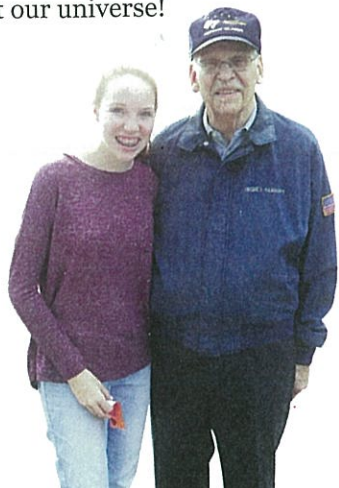
Maylyn Pittaluga and Shamalle Upton perform during a quarterly Coffee House event



## Hearing About the Hubble

Regents Earth Science students in Alexandra Danz’s 8th grade class were treated to an exciting firsthand account of how the Hubble Space Telescope was built and launched. Werner Kloepper, grandfather of student Greta Brooks, volunteered his time to share his experience with the 1990 NASA mission that launched the first space telescope, including how much time and planning went into the project and about the obstacles the team faced along the way. The Hubble is still in operation and is one of the primary methods from which astronomers are gaining information about our universe!

Highlands 8th grader Greta Brooks with her grandfather, Werner Kloepper. Mr. Kloepper was an accountant and in charge of the budgets and negotiations with NASA



## Reading Carnival

More than 100 students and parents at Post Road Elementary School had a great time at the school’s Reading Carnival, where children played reading-related games and earned prizes. According to Principal Jessie Ossorio: **“Students had fun while engaging in various reading activities that actually help to strengthen their skills without even knowing it!”**

The event (formerly Family ELA Night), is organized and run by teachers, teaching assistants and administrators, with help from WPHS volunteers who participate to earn community service hours.





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.



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## KUDOS



Photo credit - News12  
Westchester broadcast

### Scholar Athlete Recognized

Congratulations to WPHS senior Abby Leone for being named the News 12 Westchester/Pepe Auto Group Scholar Athlete of the week. Abby is a captain of the Basketball team, where she has started every game since making Varsity, and currently averages 10 points and 8 rebounds per game. She is also on the Field Hockey and Lacrosse teams. Excelling in the classroom as well as on the field, Abby is 5th in a class of 500 and is a member of the National Honor Society. She is also a tutor and plays in the band. Congratulations, Abby!



Robert Eatmon with  
band conductor  
T. Andre Feagin

### Band Skills on Display in Florida

WPHS senior Robert Eatmon did an amazing job representing White Plains at the NAFME (National Association for Music Education) All National Honor Band at Disney's Coronado Springs in Orlando, Florida. Thank you to all the music teachers along the way who helped Robert develop into the accomplished musician he has become!

### Sean Kilpatrick's Jersey Retired at WPHS

Sean Kilpatrick, a shooting guard for the NBA's Milwaukee Bucks, was recognized here at his alma mater when the district retired his jersey, #23, in a ceremony before a home game in January. Sean's family members attended on his behalf. According to Coach Spencer Mayfield, Sean was honored for reaching the highest level in the sport while being an inspiration and role model. Sean expressed his gratitude and excitement on social media.



Coach Spencer Mayfield  
with Sean Kilpatrick's  
parents, Sean Kilpatrick,  
Sr. and Regina Smith-  
Williams

### Athletics Hall of Fame

Fourteen outstanding individuals were inducted into the White Plains High School Athletics Hall of Fame in November. Recognized for their exceptional athletic achievements and good sportsmanship and citizenship, this year's honorees were: Frank Becerra, Sr. '45, Kristin Donahoe Becerra '95, Sam Bowers '75, Bill Cain '66, Michelle Donnelly '80, Ricky Edwards '79, Dick Gardella '53, Jim Gray '59, Bob Horton '60, Dave Jackson '66, Jermaine Johnson '91, Frank Lyman '69, Lou Mark '34, and John Messemer '80.

### High School Hall of Fame

The White Plains High School Hall of Fame recognizes alumni who have distinguished themselves in their chosen careers and/or have had a significant positive impact on the lives of others. The 2017 inductees are: Ralph Waite '46, award-winning stage, film and TV actor (posthumous); Dr. Robert L. Johnson '64, internationally recognized expert on adolescent health matters and Dean of the Rutgers New Jersey Medical School; Georgia Kacandes '77, producer of award-winning movies; and David Levy '80, President of Turner Broadcasting. Honorees met with students prior to the Induction Ceremony.

David Levy, Gus Waite (nephew of Ralph Waite), Bruce Waite (brother of Ralph Waite), Dr. Robert L. Johnson, Georgia Kacandes



**Community Link**

White Plains Public Schools

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