# **BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS**

Current year programming remains the same



Addition of a full-time Assistant Principal/Athletic Director

Security guards at Cahill, GDM, Riccardi, and Secondary Complex

Replacement of 5 AEDs (automated external defibrillators)

Replacement of a 15-year-old mail van with a multi-purpose vehicle

Replacement of audiometer & vision equipment



The purchase of an oboe

## Meet the Valedictorian and Salutatorian for the Class of 2023

Read the full story on Page 2.



Palak Patel



# The 2023-2024 Proposed Budget Preserves all Programming and Meets the Tax Cap Criteria for a Simple Majority Voter Approval

The Saugerties Central School District Board of Education adopted the District's \$71.19 million proposed annual school budget for the 2023-2024 school year at the April 18 Board meeting. "This budget continues to focus on student success and school safety," said Interim Superintendent Daniel Erceg.

The proposed budget reflects a 3.96% tax levy increase and meets the New York State Tax Cap formula criteria for a simple majority voter approval (50% +1).

#### **Factors Driving Expenditures**

The proposed budget reflects a \$4.7 million increase from the current budget. A significant factor in this increase is the debt payments for the 2020 capital project, which will be offset by State Building Aid reimbursement, and costs for an Ulster BOCES Capital Project that was approved by Ulster County School Districts last year.

Other increases in operational expenses include a 2.49% increase in the cost of benefits; an 11.97% increase in facilities, security, and central services; and a 9.04% increase in transportation costs (including fuel and wage increases included in the new five-year transportation contract awarded to First Student). This includes transportation for the school year as well as for summer school, athletic trips, and field trips.

#### **State Aid Increases**

Helping to offset expenditures is State Aid. This proposal includes a projected \$24,759,439 in State Aid, an increase from 2022-2023 of 11.7%. According to Saugerties Business Manager Jane St. Amour, Foundation Aid went underfunded until the State agreed in 2021 to fully provide the levels of funding called for by its formula, phased-in over a three-year period. For the first time in the formula's 17-year history, this coming school year, each school district will receive Foundation Aid that is estimated at least equal to its full phase-in amount. "The estimated increase in this year's Foundation Aid is more aligned with what Saugerties was supposed to be getting all along," said St. Amour.

Besides State Aid and the tax levy, the District will apply \$116,364 from the Employees Retirement System reserve, \$25,000 from the unemployment reserve, and \$278,110 from fund balance to balance the budget.

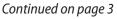
#### **Aligning Resources with Current Needs**

This proposed budget preserves all current student programs. Adjustments to some existing positions were made to align with existing needs. This includes changing two teaching assistant positions to field service technicians; replacing a vacant technology teacher with a science teacher title; eliminating a head custodian and a maintenance foreman position and replacing them with one director of facilities; and replacing a .5 teaching position with a stipend for additional responsibilities with a full-time Assistant Principal/Athletic Director (AP/AD) position. This new AP/AD position will help improve the direction of the athletic program, as well as assist with truancy issues in the Junior and Senior High School.

"Our attendance data shows that repeated absences are high in our secondary school post COVID-19," explained Erceg, adding that chronic absenteeism, defined as missing at least 10% of the school year, has increased dramatically. "The pandemic broke down the relationships students and families had with their schools," he said. "This new position will help foster those connections and help support students."

#### **Increasing Security**

The proposed spending plan also includes funding to replace monitors with trained security guards for security guards at Cahill, GDM, Riccardi, and the Secondary Complex.





# Greetings, Sawyer Community!

While the Board of Education is working toward appointing a new Superintendent, I will be serving as Interim Superintendent. I will continue to promote open lines of communication as well as a studentcentered approach to classroom learning and District decisions. If you have any questions, suggestions, or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me.

Saugerties Central School District Call Box A Saugerties, NY 12477

845-247-6500 www.saugerties.k12.ny.us

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Sincerely, Daniel Erceg, Ed.D., Interim Superintendent 845-247-6550 • Derceg1@saugerties.k12.ny.us

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Interim Superintendent of Schools Daniel Erceg ,Ed.D.



Saugerties Central School District

Newsletter produced/designed by Ulster BOCES

#### **Saugerties High School Announces Top Two Students of the Class of 2023**

The Saugerties Central School District is proud to announce that Amy Hoyt is Valedictorian of the Class of 2023, and Palak Patel is Salutatorian. "We are extremely proud of Amy and Palak, who have excelled both inside and outside of the classroom, and have contributed so much to the Saugerties community," said Saugerties High School Principal Tim Reid.

#### **Valedictorian Amy Hoyt**

Hoyt, the daughter of Keith and Jinyoung Hoyt of Saugerties, leads her class with a weighted grade point average (GPA) of 102.235, which she achieved while juggling a challenging course load and a host of extracurricular activities.

In addition to taking seven Advanced Placement (AP) courses, Hoyt participated in many clubs during her time at Saugerties. She served as president of the Student Council as well as treasurer of the Key Club, where she helped organize canned-food and warmclothing drives. She also participated in the Science Club and the Spanish Club, and was inducted into the National Honor Society. She worked part-time as a camp counselor during the summers of her freshman, sophomore, and junior years and has worked as a busser at a local restaurant during her senior year.

Hoyt, who has played Varsity tennis since Grade 7, has been the team captain for the last three years.

Although Hoyt expresses gratitude for all of her teachers, she has particular praise for Calculus teacher Debra Cacchillo and Computer Science teacher Jennifer Sauer. "They both inspired me to go into the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) field." she said. "They were both huge supporters and helped me feel more confident in my work."

Hoyt hasn't yet decided where she will be attending school this fall, but has received acceptance letters from Northeastern, Boston, and Tulane Universities. She plans to major in Computer Engineering, with a view towards pursuing a career in research and eventually owning her own company.

#### **Salutatorian Palak Patel**

Patel, the daughter of Sanjay and Heema Patel of Saugerties, earned her Salutatorian status by achieving a weighted GPA of 101.168. In addition to handling a rigorous course load (including six AP classes) and attending the Ulster BOCES New Visions Health program, she has been involved in a range of extracurricular activities. A member of the Key Club, she served as treasurer in Grade 10, vice president in Grade 11, and president in Grade 12. She was inducted into the National Honor Society and serves as the secretary. She is also the treasurer for the Class of 2023. By serving as a student representative during various building leadership team meetings, she has provided a voice to her fellow students.

Outside of school, Patel volunteers with the Youth Voter Corps, a grassroots campaign that helps

# Principals Thank Students for Doing GOOD

From "tasting" a good book, to reading to an attentive pet, to creating a photographic portrait featuring an interesting book "face," Saugerties Central School District students and their families had a wealth of reading activities to choose from during a reading challenge sponsored by the District's Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA). The challenge, coordinated by Jessica Riozzi and her team of parent volunteers, was designed to inspire and support students to build on the gains they've made during the school year as readers and writers.

Students were asked to keep track of the number of minutes they spent reading outside of classroom work during a threeweek period of time. Students with the most minutes of logged reading would be awarded a prize at the final assembly.

To help motivate their students, Elementary and Junior High principals also got into the spirit of things by offering incentives. The Cahill and Grant D. Morse Elementary School principals said they would gladly get "slimed" if their students met their goals. The building administrator at the Mt. Marion Learning Center, along with the Riccardi Elementary School principal, chose to have their hard-working readers cover them in silly string. Who said that reading has to be a solitary, clean, and/or quiet activity?

All of the participating schools had something to be proud of during this year's competition. Several records were broken. Highlights included Cahill students logging the most minutes of reading, Riccardi students having the highest reading average, and Grant D. Morse students achieving a participation rate of 100 percent. Pre-K students saw a 50% increase in participation. Congratulations to all our readers!



# "Centers" Help Kids Grow Motor and Social Skills

**Y** oung children develop fine motor skills at different rates. But when youngsters have trouble mastering those skills, it can make activities like zipping a jacket, tying a shoe, or gathering up school materials difficult. Francine Masula's Pre-K students at the Mt. Marion Learning Center enjoy using their fine motor skills each morning during "center time." Students travel between several stations, which include all kinds of fun activities such as playing with bristle blocks, exploring sensory bins, carrying out pretend "housekeeping" chores, and making special craft projects. In addition to practicing various motor skills, the children are learning about themselves and others. They are being careful about how they're talking to their peers, are doing their best to keep their hands to themselves, and are learning to share. In addition, they are using their words to explain what they want, and working on regulating their own emotions throughout center time.

raise awareness about voting and encourages young people to register to vote. She also played Junior Varsity Lacrosse in Grades 9 and 10.

Patel credits her parents and brother for her success. "They taught me to become more focused," she explained, adding, "I'm so thankful to have them in my life."

Patel says she is excited about entering the medical field and attributes some of this desire to attending the Ulster BOCES New Visions Health program. "I feel prepared to step into a hospital because of the things I've experienced through this program," she said. She noted that she has witnessed several real-life surgeries, including a gallbladder removal.

Patel will be attending Siena College in the fall. She will be pursuing the Siena/Albany Medical College Program in Science Humanities and Medicine on a pre-med educational track.



# Saugerties 2023-2024 PROPOSED BUDGET

# THREE-PART BUDGET

**The Program component** - provides funding for instruction and educational support services for students. Funds for transportation are also included in this component.

**The Capital component** - pays for maintaining buildings and grounds, including electricity, heat, repairs, phone services, and the principal and interest payments on serial bonds.

**The Administrative component** - provides for overall general support and management activities, including business office operations, payroll, accounts payable, purchasing, tax collection, general administration, personnel, legal representation, public information, insurance, and auditing services. Cost of administration and supervision of each of the schools is also included here.

<b>Budget Components</b>				
	2022-23 Adopted Budget	2023-24 Proposed Budget		
Program	\$55,128,466	\$57,426,065		
Capital	\$5,103,853	\$6,822,996		
Administration	\$6,194,397	\$6,943,498		
TOTAL	\$66,426,716	\$71,192,559		

# **REVENUE SUMMARY**

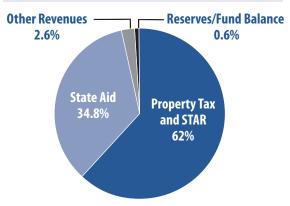
**Property Tax** - The Saugerties Central School District serves the Town and Village of Saugerties and parts of the Towns of Woodstock and Ulster. The District receives a portion of its funding through taxes levied on real property within these municipalities. The District calculates the tax levy and the corresponding tax rate based on assessments provided by each municipality. New York State law states that all property within a municipality be assessed at a uniform percentage of the market value.

**State Education Aid** - The estimated New York State Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 increased State Aid to the Saugerties Central School District by approximately 11.7%. The fully phased in Foundation Aid increased by over \$900,000. Also increasing are the Building Aid and BOCES Aid to offset the Debt Service related to the District and Ulster BOCES Capital Projects.

**Other Revenue Sources** - The District will use a portion of the available fund balance and reserves to support the 2023-2024 budget; this will include \$278,110 from fund balance, \$25,000 from the unemployment reserve fund and \$116,364 from the Employee Retirement System reserve fund towards the replacement of equipment in various departments. Other revenue includes interest income, rental of space by non-profit organizations, payments for tuition and health services from other school districts, money from PILOT agreements, Medicaid reimbursements, and refunds of prior-year expenses.

<b>Revenue By Category</b>				
	2023-24 Proposed Revenues			
Property Tax & STAR	\$44,185,168	<b>62</b> %		
State Aid	\$24,759,439	<b>34.8</b> %		
Other Revenue	\$1,828,478	2.6%		
Reserves/Fund Balance	\$419,474	0.6%		
TOTAL	\$71,192,559	100%		

#### Where the Money Comes From



# EXPENDITURES SUMMARY

## Here is how the proposed budget breaks down by category:

Salaries/Benefits - In the 2023-2024 school year the District will have approximately 510 employees, including teachers, librarians, nurses, teacher assistants, teacher aides, administrators, secretaries, school psychologists, social workers, guidance counselors, maintenance, custodial staff, and other support staff. Benefits include District costs for the following: health insurance, Social Security, Unemployment, Workers' Compensation, and mandated contributions to the State retirement systems for the approximately 510 employees.

BOCES Services - BOCES services refer to contracted services with Ulster BOCES. These cooperative services range from administrative services such as the student management program, to student services such as career and technical education and special education programs. Purchasing services through BOCES allows the District to receive a portion of the cost the following year through BOCES State Aid. The BOCES was set up in 1948 to allow districts to share services.

<b>Expenditures By Category</b>				
	2023-24 Proposed Expenditures			
Salaries & Benefits	\$50,229,961	<b>70.6</b> %		
BOCES	\$6,115,164	8.6%		
Contractual	\$10,326,646	14.5%		
<b>Equipment &amp; Supplies</b>	\$1,593,069	2.2%		
Debt Service	\$2,502,719	3.5%		
Interfund Transfers	\$425,000	0.6%		
TOTAL	\$71,192,559	100%		

#### The 2023-2024 Proposed Budget

Continued from page 1

"Concern for student safety remains a top priority for the District," said Erceg. "The District is constantly exploring ways to update and modernize our facilities and our procedures so we are prepared and can minimize safety risks." Having security guards, who are specifically trained in taking care of a wide range of incidents that can occur on school campuses and help provide immediate assistance on the scene, is one step being implemented.

#### Enhancements

The Music department would also add an oboe to its instrumental repertoire. This comes on the heels of the addition of a bassoon. According to Music teacher Michael Cho, "Both of these instruments are very important to the world of classical music, with scores of solos, duets, and melodies behind them. Having these two instruments would elevate our music program to a whole new level."

This budget also replaces five AEDs (automated external defibrillators), a 15-year-old mail van with a multi-purpose van, and outdated audiometer and vision equipment, which is required for yearly screenings.

The proposed budget also includes a \$100,000 Capital Outlay project for additional flooring work at Riccardi Elementary School.

#### What strategies helped support this budget?

Savings created through the repurposing of Mt. Marion, along with other carefully-planned financial actions, is providing the ability to continue to support student programming levels that we wouldn't otherwise have been able to do, explained St. Amour. This year, 15 new courses and five new clubs at the High School, two reading specialists as well as librarians and psychologists at each of our elementary school buildings were added. These positions were requested by stakeholders throughout our Governance Committee communications.

#### **Capital Project Update**

The Capital Project approved by voters in December 2020 is moving along. This past year the Junior/Senior High School track was resurfaced, and Cahill Elementary School and the Hildebrant building both received new roofing.

In May, site work is expected to begin on an addition at Grant D. Morse Elementary School. Replacement work on some exterior walls and windows at the Junior/Senior High School is also planned to start.

Decisions are being made about the auditorium at the Junior/Senior High School, as well as the type of doors that will be installed in the secure entrance vestibules at each school. Other approved projects are being scheduled for the summer and fall.

#### **Contingency Budget**

If the proposed budget fails to receive approval, the Board of Education has the option of re-submitting the same budget or a revised budget to voters, or adopting a contingency budget. If a budget is defeated a second time, then the District is required to adopt a contingency budget.

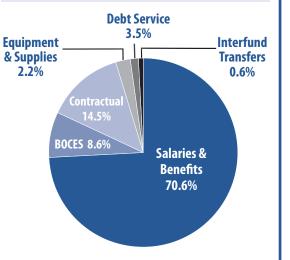
Under a contingency budget, reductions would need

**Contractual** - Contractual costs refer to those services the District cannot perform in-house and need to contract out. These include various required health and safety inspections and other specialty services as well as outside program placements for students with disabilities.

**Supplies/Equipment** - This includes all materials and supplies needed for schools and offices, including textbooks. It also includes funding for the replacement of cleaning equipment, grounds equipment, athletic equipment, and computer upgrades. The District has a technology plan to guide the research, budgeting, and purchase of technology equipment—plus, a large portion of computer purchases will receive either direct 1:1 State Aid or BOCES Aid.

**Debt Service** - This is the amount set aside annually to pay interest and the portion of the principal due on debt. The increase in this category is the result of the current District Capital Project and Ulster BOCES Capital Project.





**Interfund Transfers** - This is for the school lunch fund, a capital outlay project, and the local share of the State-aided summer school program for special education students that is accounted for in the Special Aid Fund.

to be made to maintain the 2023-2024 tax levy at the same level as the current school year. By law, all equipment purchases would be removed from the budget, and only essential maintenance would be able to be performed on facilities. The District would also be required to eliminate free community use of facilities.

#### **Board Seats Available**

The election of three members to the Board of Education will also be on the ballot this year. There are five candidates running for three available seats.

The candidates, in the order they will appear on the ballot, are Jeffrey Riozzi, Carole Kelder, Timothy Wells, Ashley Sanders, and Andrea Viviani.

#### **Budget Vote and School Board Elections**

The community is encouraged to participate in the school budget vote and Board of Education election on Tuesday, May 16, from 6 AM to 9 PM, at all three elementary schools: Cahill, Grant D. Morse, and Riccardi, as well as the Mt. Marion Learning Center.

If you have any questions, please contact the District Clerk at (845) 247-6550.

# Saugerties 2023-2024 PROPOSED BUDGET

# SAUGERTIES CSD CELEBRATES MAJOR MILESTONE

Saugerties custodial worker Gene Zambrella was recognized for his 50 years of service to the Saugerties Central School District at the March Board of Education meeting. He was also treated to a surprise party by his family, friends, and colleagues. Zambrella started working at the SCSD on March 26, 1973. He retired in 2005 after 32 years. But he couldn't keep away, and he

returned as a substitute custodial worker. Then in 2006, Zambrella was also appointed as a part-time Food Service helper in addition to his custodial work. We are so happy to honor him for his service to our schools and our community. Thank you, Sir Gene!

50 years of service And all i got was this LOUSY SHIRT!

*Carmella the Bunny Visits Students at Grant D. Morse* 



Jessica McCaig's Kindergarten class has been spending time with Carmella the bunny! Carmella, a two-and-a-half-year-old Mini Lop rabbit, is residing in the classroom as part of McCaig's life cycle lessons. Students have been learning about Carmella's likes and dislikes, her behaviors and moods, and some of the many things that make her different from other animals. In one lesson, the students were tasked with writing about Carmella and her habits. The young learners are especially enjoying the times when Carmella is taken out of her cage to roam freely and finds a spot to "flop" on her stomach– something bunnies do when they are relaxed and fully content! **Estimated Tax Impact** The projected real property tax levy required to support the proposed expenditure plan is \$44,185,168, which is a 3.96% increase over the current year levy. This figure also includes an estimated \$3 million reimbursement from the State for the STAR program. The budget meets the criteria of the New York State Tax Cap calculation for a simple majority voter approval.

**Estimated Equalization Rates** Each municipality has its own way of assessing property. Actual tax impact is based on assessments and equalization rates set by NYS. This process is created to "equalize" assessments from town to town, which helps ensure that a house in Saugerties, for instance, is taxed the same as a house in Woodstock. Rates are finalized by the State in July or August, months after the budget vote. By law, the District must hold their budget vote on the third Tuesday in May, so actual tax implications are impossible to determine. When a municipality undergoes a revaluation, there may be an effect on taxes. The District has no part in determining assessments or revaluations.

**Tax Levy vs. Tax Rate** The tax levy represents the total amount of taxes a school district needs to support the school budget. The cost of the tax levy is shared among all taxpayers included in the tax base. The tax rate is the dollar value per assessed property value, apportioned by township, necessary to collect the full levy. The tax rate is calculated by dividing the total levy by the total assessed values and multiplying by \$1,000. The Towns do not finalize their assessment rolls, which are made up of all assessed values, until the summer. The tentative assessment rolls show values are increasing within the Town of Saugerties. This increase in values will cause the tax rate to decrease. This happens because when new homes or increased assessment values are added to the tax rolls, the levy is then divided by a larger number, therefore reducing the individual rate per \$1000.

## **STAR Program Updates**

**Why switch to the STAR credit from the STAR exemption?** If you currently receive your STAR benefit as a reduction on your school tax bill (the STAR exemption), you may receive a greater benefit if you switch to the STAR credit to receive a check instead. The value of the STAR credit savings may increase by as much as 2% each year, but the value of the STAR exemption savings cannot increase. The STAR exemption savings can never be higher than the STAR credit savings.

Municipality	Enhanced STAR Credit	Enhanced STAR Exemption Savings	Difference Between Enhanced STAR Credit & Exemption Savings	Basic STAR Credit	Basic STAR Exemption Savings	Difference Between Basic STAR Credit & Exemption Savings
Town of Saugerties	\$1,426.00	\$1,329.00	\$97.00	\$596.81	\$592.00	\$4.81
Town of Ulster	\$1,399.00	\$1,293.00	\$106.00	\$587.69	\$587.69	\$0.00
Town of Woodstock	\$1,376.00	\$1,272.00	\$104.00	\$612.00	\$600.00	\$12.00

## **Voting Information**

Any resident of the Town of Saugerties may vote in the School Budget/Trustee election whether or not they are registered with the Ulster County Board of Elections, provided they meet the following criteria:

- Are a citizen of the United States
- Age 18 years, or older
- Have been a resident of the school District for a period of 30 days or more

Absentee ballots are available for eligible voters who are unable to vote at the polls on May 16. Absentee ballot applications are available for pick up in the Hildebrandt Building (District Clerk's Office) on weekdays from 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM. A voter who would like to pick up an absentee ballot in person must return the completed ballot by 5:00 PM on May 16. If the voter wishes the ballot to be mailed to them, the completed application must be received in the District Clerk's office by May 11. If you have any questions regarding voting, please contact the Superintendent's Office at 845-247-6550.

How is the Tax Cap Impacting the Budget?

Under current NYS law, a school district must plan its budget around a complex State formula that calculates a baseline tax levy increase, called their "tax cap." This calculation will be different for each school district and will change from year to year.



#### The Board of Education has adopted a 3.96 percent levy increase that is at the allowable levy limit under the State's Tax Cap formula and therefore will need a simple majority voter approval.

Budgets that carry a tax levy increase at or below this calculation need the approval of a simple majority (50 percent plus one) of voters. Any proposal higher than this calculation requires a supermajority approval (60 percent).

Specific exemptions are considered in the formula. Another component of the complex calculation is completed as either the CPI (consumer price index) or two percent, whichever is less. The extraordinary increase in the cost of goods and services that consumers are experiencing at this time has created a significant gap in our tax cap calculation. Although NYS has identified the CPI level at 8 percent, we were only permitted to use 2 percent in this component of the formula, which capped our levy at a level below the existing CPI.

**How do I get more detailed information about the budget?** The Budget document is available on the District website. Please contact Business Manager Jane St. Amour at 845-247-6520 if you have specific questions.

# School District 2023-2024 PROPOSED BUDGET

# **School District Budget Notice**

OVERALL BUDGET PROPOSAL	Budget Adopted for the 2022-2023 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2023-2024 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2023-2024 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$66,426,716	\$71,192,559	\$70,038,208
Increase/Decrease for the 2023-24 School Year		\$4,765,843	\$3,611,492
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		7.17%	5.44%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		8.0%	
A. Proposed Tax Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$42,503,847	\$44,185,168	
B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	-0-	-0-	
C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable **	-0-	-0-	
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy	-0-	-0-	
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy $(A + B + C - D)$	\$42,503,847	\$44,185,168	\$42,503,847
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$885,151	\$1,002,427	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, Excluding Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$41,618,696	\$43,182,741	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, Excluding Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions $(E - B - F + D)$	\$41,618,696	\$43,182,741	
I. Difference: (G – H); (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval – See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) $^{\ast\ast}$	-0-	-0-	
Administrative component	\$6,194,397	\$6,943,498	\$6,381,662
Program component	\$55,128,466	\$57,426,065	\$56,987,550
Capital component	\$5,103,853	\$6,822,996	\$6,668,996

In the event that the budget is defeated, the Board of Education would be required to adopt a contingent budget, pursuant to Section 2023 of Education Law, in which the tax levy may not exceed the prior year tax levy and is subject to an administrative cap. Certain items required by law to be excluded from the contingent budget include expenses related to equipment purchases, certain student supplies, capital appropriations, non-represented personnel salary increases, and costs associated with community use of school facilities. These items are equal to \$1,154,351.

** List Separate Propositions that are not included in the Total Buc Amount: (Tax Levy associated with educational or transportation	<b>Decerimti</b>	Description		
propositions are not eligible for exclusion and may affect voter apprequirements)	No Separate Pro	No Separate Propositions		
<sup>1</sup> The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.			Budget Proposed 23-24 School Year	
	Estimated Basic STAR Exemption savi	ngs <sup>1</sup>	592	

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2023-24 by the qualified voters of the Saugerties Central School District, Ulster County, New York, will be held at Mt. Marion Learning Center, Cahill, Morse, and Riccardi Elementary school(s) in said district on Tuesday, May 16, 2023 between the hours of 6:00am and 9:00pm, prevailing time in the Elementary school(s), at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.



# **Junior High Students Speak Up During Their Oral Presentations**

# Sample Ballot

The wording on the proposition will appear as shown in this example and you will have a choice of either YES or NO:

**PROPOSITION 1:** Shall the Board of Education of the Saugerties Central School District be authorized to expend the sums of money which will be required for School District purposes for the 2023-2024 school year in the total amount of \$71,192,559 (the budget), and to levy the necessary sum against the taxable real property in the District?

### **Election of Board of Education Members**

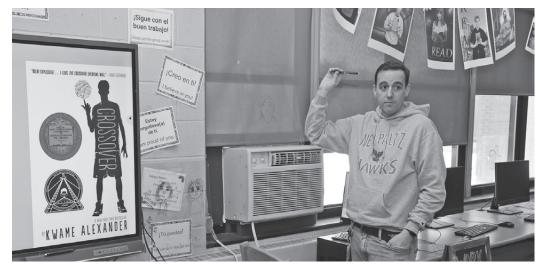
Three 3-Year Term Vacancies are available at this time. Voters may select no more than THREE candidates:

> **Jeffrey Riozzi Carole Kelder Timothy Wells Ashley Sanders Andrea Viviani**

**S** tudents in Devon Deery's Grade 7 English class were recently asked to play the role of book editors at a publishing house. As part of their role-playing, the "editors" had to decide whether a book that had been submitted to their "office" should-or should not-get published. It was all part of a Young Writers Publishing Contest that Deery had created. Deery's students were each required to read a real literary work (that had in fact already been published). Then, they each gave a full report on the book in front of their teacher and classmates. Students had to discuss their book's setting and themes, as well as its protagonist and antagonist. They were also tasked with giving their book an overall rating, and a recommendation about whether it was worthy of publication. This project not only improved the students' reading and writing skills, but also their oral, critical thinking, organizational, and leadership skills!



C augerties Central School District students shared some Olove this Valentine's Day! District students made more than 1,000 cards, which were delivered to residents of nursing homes, adult social day care facilities, and senior centers throughout the region. Clients at EverCare Life Social Adult Day Care Center in Poughkeepsie were given the opportunity to pose for a photo with their favorite Valentine. What a great way to show our older population that they are appreciated and valued!



# Riccardi Teacher Brings Blindness Awareness to the Sighted Classroom

Riccardi Elementary School students in Bonnie Brown's Grade 4 reading classes received a firsthand account about overcoming adversity recently when Matthew Brown, a blind teacher, visited the school to speak about his experiences as a visually impaired person. Mr. Brown was accompanied by his seeing-eye dog.

Prior to the visit, students participated in a Zoom conversation with Mr. Brown, who is Ms. Brown's brother. The teacher and students also read and discussed the book *The Kid Who Saved Superman*, which features a prominent character based on Mr. Brown.

A few years ago, one of Mr. Brown's students at P.S. 36, a New York City public school where he is an English Language Arts and math teacher, won a national writing contest that tasked students with describing a "real hero at their school." The winning entry, by 13-year-old Hakeem Bennett, was used as inspiration for the character.



Bennett wrote, "My teacher Mr. Brown is visually impaired. That's not what makes him a hero. It is because he takes public transportation everyday with Stanley, his dog, to school. That is why he is a true, everyday superhero,"

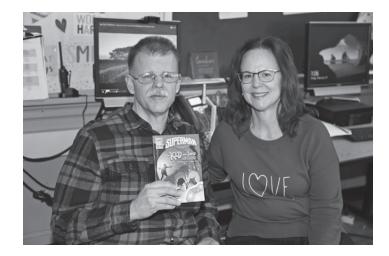
Bennett explains, "To ride the train in Brooklyn is chaotic and not the safest even for people who do not have a disability." Bennett goes on to say, "Traveling in the snow and ice with Stanley makes him even more courageous."

Brown, who was born blind, spoke about

the many hardships he faces in everyday life. He pointed out a number of issues that may not be very apparent to those with sight, such as electric cars being too quiet to hear, something he is trying to change through the National Federation of the Blind.

At the conclusion of Mr. Brown's talk, students had the opportunity to ask him questions, which ranged from "How did you get your seeing-eye dog?" to "How do you know when you're at the end of the curb when walking?"

Ms. Brown said, "This lesson aims to help bring awareness about blindness and to help foster understanding, acceptance, and respect for those who are different from themselves." She hopes it will help sighted students to learn ways to interact with people who are blind, and to become more familiar with the tools and techniques used by visually impaired people.







# Grant D. Morse Celebrates World

# Engineering Day!

**B** roups of students in Grades 4, 5, and 6 learned about the possibilities of an engineering career through a hands-on challenge. The students were asked to design and build a bridge using only straws, spaghetti, and tape. Their creations were then put to the test, with bags of 25 and 50 pennies consecutively stacked on top of the bridges to test their structural

# **Saugerties Mathletes Team Ranks Sixth in Sections**



soundness. Many bridges successfully held up to five pounds of pennies without buckling! The strongest bridges from each grade were then placed into the final contest against each other. This year's winners were from Grade 6.

This event was organized by IBM Development Engineer Michael DeAngelis and ADP Software Engineer Mike MacIsaac to help generate excitement for the sciences during World Engineering Day, which was celebrated on March 4.



Congratulations are in order for the Saugerties Mathletes A-Team and their advisor, Math and Computer Science teacher Jennifer Sauer. The team qualified to compete in the Dutchess-Ulster-Sullivan-Orange (DUSO) Math League Sectional Championship, which was held on March 8 at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie. The Saugerties team placed sixth out of 20 teams! Michele Loebbaka was also selected to compete at the State competition, which was held on April 22 in Ithaca.

These mathletes take on solving highly complex math problems by using the "tools" of trigonometry, calculus, geometry, probability, and algebra. During the first part of the competition, students were required to complete a number of problems within a certain time period. The second part included a relay round, which had teammates completing portions of a problem and passing it along to the next person to complete.

Afterwards, everyone was invited to listen to the guest speaker, Vassar Math teacher Andy Borum. He discussed how and why he became a Math teacher and what he is currently researching.

So what is the common denominator of these mathletes? They all love flexing their brains!

# Sawyer Motors Foundation Innovation Grant Leads to Holocaust Survivor Visit to the Junior High

Saugerties Grade 8 students heard a distressing account of history on March 13, when Holocaust survivor Tibor Spitz visited their school to speak about his experience fleeing, and surviving, the Nazis.

The students were respectful and attentive as Spitz described how, as a child, he was forced to hide out in the woods in a makeshift shelter for seven months during World War II. He talked about some of the many hardships he endured throughout his lifetime, including losing many family members, being cold and hungry while hiding in the woods, and struggling to return to normal life after the war ended with only \$10 to his name.

Spitz shared how he grew up in a small town in Slovakia, which at that time was part of Czechoslovakia. As a young boy, he said that he had enjoyed living under democratic rule, going to school, playing games, and listening to music. But by 1933, Spitz's life changed dramatically when Adolf Hitler became Germany's Chancellor and set into motion his vision of creating a so-called "master race."

At age 10, Spitz was prevented from attending school and was required to wear a yellow star, which identified him as being Jewish. That same year, his nation's government negotiated with Nazi Germany for the

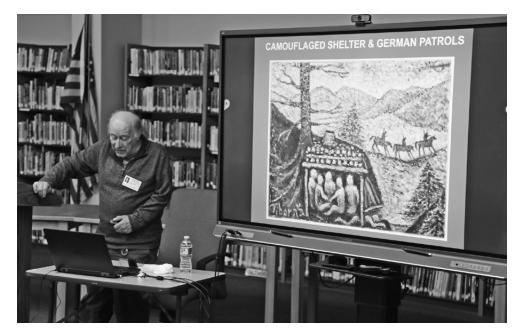


mass deportation of Jewish people to German-occupied Poland to so-called "labor camps." Spitz's family had heard, however, that these camps were not for labor, but were rather "factories" for murdering people. Spitz, along with his family, had to make a harrowing life-ordeath decision: "Be passive and be killed; stand up and revolt and eventually be killed; or try to survive by all means." They decided to fight to survive.

Spitz and his family fled their home to hide in

the woods. There, they built an underground shelter out of tree limbs and rocks. They remained inside this shelter for seven months, existing on berries and mushrooms they gathered under the cloak of night. In winter, they sheltered beneath the snow and ice.

They managed to survive through April of 1945, when Allied troops



liberated the survivors of the camps. He said he was lucky to have found safety in the woods and to avoid capture, but his pain would not stop in the post-war era. "We made it out alive, but the government did not want us to remember it," he said. "We were not allowed to publicly mourn any Holocaust victims, or to talk about what happened."

Spitz did return to school and was recruited to take up chemical engineering. Later the Soviet Union-dominated government of Czechoslovakia sent Spitz to Cuba on a work assignment. It was not easy work. Escaping Cuba, he first lived in Canada before relocating to the United States and eventually settling in Kingston.

At age 68, Spitz began creating artwork to help him cope with the horrors he had witnessed and tried to suppress. His Holocaust artwork has been showcased in museums around the world. "We weren't allowed to grieve. We had to just move on and embrace life however we could do it, whether it was through music, art, hope, or love," Spitz said. "I can't be angry or resentful because that will become like baggage and weigh me down, and besides, I am alive, and that is what I must be thankful for."

Grade 8 teacher Justyna Leverich commented, "Tibor's life makes you realize that everyone has the power to overcome hardship and tragedy and how we handle those difficulties is what makes all the difference."

At the conclusion of Spitz's talk, the students had the opportunity to ask him questions, which ranged from "What did you do while you were in hiding?" to "Did you ever come face-to-face with a Nazi?" to "How did your experience during the Holocaust impact you later in life?"

Afterwards, Grade 8 student Ella Maxwell asked if she could have her picture taken with Spitz. "He is such an inspiration," said Maxwell. "I feel so bad for everything he went through, yet he is so strong. It's amazing!"

Grade 8 teacher Katharine Squires said that she is grateful these students were given this opportunity to hear Spitz's story. "As Holocaust survivors continue to age, students are losing access to this firsthand knowledge," she observed.

# Cahill's Got Talent!

Cahill Elementary School held a variety show on

March 30. Twenty-five acts took to the stage, showcasing their singing, dancing, instrumental, karate, and hockey skills. Students, faculty, administrators, and parents attended the nighttime event in the school's gymnasium. "It was great to see the students perform on stage, some for the first time," said Cahill Principal Shannon Molyneaux. "Students were very supportive of each other. It was really nice to see."

# Attendees Learn to Bargain at French Club Flea Market

The District would like to thank all of the vendors and attendees who came out in support of the French Club's annual Flea Market on February 25. Close to 80 vendors were selling everything from jewelry to clothing, honey to photography services, antiques to toys. Nearly 5,000 customers attended the event.





Proceeds from ticket sales and vendor booth fees will help fund future French Club events and trips. *Merci beaucoup!* (Many thanks!)





# Cahill Students Listen to a Book with a Hidden Deeper Meaning

Ct. Patrick's Day, which is celebrated annually **J**on March 17, is a great opportunity to teach children about Irish culture and traditions. This year, children at Cahill Elementary School learned all about shamrocks, leprechauns, and colorful rainbows, but they also learned how being different is what makes each one of us so special. This year, Professor Featherbottom (AKA Kingston author Paul O'Neill) visited Elizabeth Lopez's room to read his book, The Last Rainbow. The book tells the story of a leprechaun called Fergus, who is looking forward to receiving his own special rainbow at the Annual Rainbow Celebration. But when Fergus finds out that all of the rainbows are gone except for one,



which lacks the color red, Fergus feels unlucky. King Scrimclaw explains that he shouldn't feel unlucky; in fact, he should feel like the luckiest leprechaun of all. Scrimclaw says, "Sometimes, Fergus, it's what we think we are missing that makes us most special."

# The Great Wall of China Gets its Strength from Sticky Rice



Students in Grade 3 at Riccardi Elementary School recently learned about the Great Wall of China. During the course of their research, students learned that the wall was created to prevent invasion from the Mongols and to help protect the Silk Road trade routes. They also learned that the wall is more than 13,000 miles in length, between 13 and 16 feet wide, and over 25 feet high. But, maybe the most interesting fact they learned was that modern-day scientists discovered that many of the bricks in the Great Wall of China were held together with mortar made from sticky rice! The scientists—as well as modern construction workers—believe that when sticky rice is mixed with standard mortar, the combined ingredients become super strong and more resistant to water.

# SAUGERTIES DRAMA CLUB GOES DEEP INTO THE WOODS

verything is happily ever after, at least until reality hits. That's also when the Saugerties Drama Club's production of *Into the Woods* shifted from an amusing fairy tale into a dark-yetuplifting finale.



More than two dozen junior and senior

high school students collaborated on staging the Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine musical, which was directed by Justin Zelamsky and assistant director Rebecca MacDougall. The performances took place March 17, 18, and 19.

Together, the Saugerties thespians treated audiences to a stellar production that hit all the key notes of a challenging two-and-a-half-hour show that is a modern take on the Brothers Grimm fairy tales. This production touched upon a number of modern and universal themes, including life, loss, fidelity, revenge, and the importance of community.

Theatergoers were entranced and mesmerized throughout the show!



# Life Science Students had the "Bird"en of Creating a Nest

Students in Alyse Dietrich's Grade 7 Life Science class were recently learning about birds and their nests. Bird nests, they discovered, come in many different forms. Some nests are bowlshaped, made from twigs and straw, and built on a tree branch, while other "nests" are no more than div

tree branch, while other "nests" are no more than divots dug into the sand near shorelines. Some birds weave intricate hanging basket-like nests, and others make large clay adobe-style nests. There is even a small bird called a swiftlet in Asia that builds a nest out of its own saliva.

After researching the different designs, locations, and materials used for nests, students were tasked with making their own bird's nest and then writing about it. Their nests needed to be strong–able to hold an egg without breaking it–and, ideally, able to weather a storm without falling apart. The nest-making project helped students to stop, take a closer look at nature, and understand the importance of environmental preservation. It was an egg-citing, hands-on project.

Students in the class couldn't believe what they were hearing, and they wondered if it was true. To test the strength of this ancient building material, teachers Margaret Mullen and Stephanie Duvernoy-Pettit invited J. Mullen



and Sons Construction Management owner John Mullen and engineer Joe Mihm to help the students build their own rock wall using sticky rice mortar. The wall, the young builders found, was surprisingly strong.



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