

June 2023

Message from the Superintendent



Dear graduates,

"A bird sitting on a tree is never afraid of the branch breaking, not because of the trust in the branch but in their own wings." Charlie Wardle, the author of self improvement books, speaks about having confidence in oneself and not

relying on the integrity of the systems or supports around you. Though it is wonderful to have a supportive structure in life, the more you build confidence in yourself and learn to manage your reaction to life's difficulties, the better and more successful you will be.

A few months ago, a video came across my internet feed. It was a young man named Hal. Hal was in an accident that left him hospitalized, paralyzed, and unable to perform normal life tasks. While in the hospital Hal realized a very important life lesson. You cannot change the things that have happened to you, but you always have control of how you react to them. Hal realized that spending time wallowing in his new state of being would only compound the loss he was suffering. He could be angry at the driver who caused the crash, he could be resentful for the things he would never be able to do again or he could accept it and maximize his experience on this newly developing journey.

Due to his consistently positive attitude, doctors who were caring for Hal were concerned that he was in denial and offered ongoing mental health support to help Hal find the emotions associated with his injuries. Hal maintained a positive attitude and said that in these difficult times he realized that winning at life starts with accepting life before it happens. He found strength in the statement, "can't change it." It closed the doors of resentment and unrealistic expectations and allowed him to focus on moving forward. In any of life's circumstances, he would allow himself five minutes to feel strong emotions and then he would repeat aloud, "can't change it" and focus on forward motion. Hal has made a full recovery despite all odds.

Life is a series of ups and downs, changing plans and changing directions. You can't change that, but you will always be able to control how you respond to the "plot twists" along the way.

You can have confidence in yourself and the wings you have strengthened to fly solo. You can rely on yourself and know that even if the tree limb breaks, you will be okay because you have everything within you that you need to keep from falling. You can choose your dreams and believe that no matter where you start, one step in a positive direction will bring you closer than standing still in self doubt. As Charlie Wardle shares, "learn to be your own best friend, because too often we fall into the trap of being our own worst enemy."

On behalf of the administrative team, I wish for you to believe in yourself and know that as you go off on your journey you have everything within you to succeed. Do not rely on the false security of others. Believe in yourself and "believe in the beauty of your dreams" because that is Eleanor Roosevelt's key to the future.

Congratulations again. Go out there and live the life you have always dreamed of living.

Celebrating our Graduates

Millbrook Sends Off the Class of 2023

Millbrook High School held its annual graduation ceremony on June 23, where 70 seniors became graduates making their families, friends and teachers proud and some even a little teary-eyed.

The graduates paraded up the hill from the high school to the Athletic Complex and accepted their diplomas to huge rounds of applause. Making their parents even prouder, the students were accepted to nearly 70 colleges including Vassar College and Hawaii Pacific University.

Math Teacher Cindy Rosenzweig, voted by students to be keynote speaker, credited them for reaffirming her decision to retire from practicing law to become a teacher. She appreciates their energy, resilience and hard work in their classes and extracurricular activities.

"Success is when preparation meets opportunity; you embody that application of hard work and perseverance in everything you do," Rosenzweig said. "You make everything so much fun, just by being you."

Unlike typical graduation speeches, Rosenzweig said there was not a piece of advice she would give to students that she could not learn from them, adding they taught her something new every day.

"Your strength and your vulnerability, all add value to the lives around you," Rosenzweig said. "Your value is not just in what you do, it's in who you are."

Valedictorian Olivia Lucal recalled how her freshman year was upended due to COVID where it taught her and her classmates about empathy, community and how to be resilient amongst lockdowns, virtual learning and uncertainty about returning to school.

"It taught us how to be strong in the face of obstacles," Lucal said. "Our success is due to our own fortitude."

Lucal encouraged the graduating class to continue to push boundaries, foster dialogue and promote unity. "We cannot let fear hinder our progress, nor can we allow uncertainty and bigotry to take root," Lucal said. "There's a world out there with our names written on it, so make sure to spell them right."

Alivia Renna plans to attend Dutchess Community College (DCC) and later transfer to a four-year college to study interior design. She offered two pieces of advice to next year's seniors.

"Show up to school and enjoy your friends while you have them," Renna said.

Elijah Butts transferred to Millbrook from Queens during his senior year and will most miss the music and sports opportunities he was offered.

"It took me a while to get used to here," Butts said. "I enjoyed my time here."

Butts will study at DCC for a semester and a half and transfer to Marist to pursue either accounting or exercise science. He advises upcoming seniors to avoid procrastinating.

"Get everything done first, then have your free time," Butts said.



Millbrook's Class of 2023 heads towards the Athletic Complex.



Above: Valedictorian Olivia Lucal addresses the Class of 2023.
Below: Elijah Butts walks on stage to accept his diploma as Elizabeth Bosan shakes hands with Math Teacher Cindy Rosenzweig.



Millbrook's Class of 2023 toss their graduation caps in the air.

Eighth Grade Students Move Up CLASS of 2027

Sixty-eight Millbrook Middle School eighth-grade students dressed their best to celebrate Moving Up Day on June 22 at Millbrook High School, with a crowd of family members, friends, and teachers there to cheer them on.

Superintendent Caroline Hernandez Pidala congratulated the students on their accomplishments and reminded the future class of 2027 to work hard in high school. She shared a family expression that helped to motivate her when she was a student “Dime con quien andas y te diré quien eres,” which roughly translates to “Show me who your friends are, and I’ll tell you who you are.” “It’s your behavior that comes before success,” she explained.

Promotional Speaker, Alden Principal Tom Libka relished the opportunity to address his former students who moved up from fifth grade during the pandemic. He praised their ability to support each other through challenging times.

“Remember the strength of the team is in each individual member and the strength of the individual is in the team,” he reminded them.

Libka urged students to continue to take care of each other, to communicate and to connect.

“You have accomplished so much and are ready to make your mark,” he said. “We look forward to great things.”

The following students received special recognition for their eighth-grade achievements.



Lilianna Aiello - Principal's List, Science 8, NYS Comptroller's Award.

Serena Bunga - Principal's List.

Vanesa Carmona Antonio - Principal's List, French 8, Media Literacy 6-8, P.R.I.D.E. 8.

Avery Dwyer - Principal's List, Chorus 8 Spirit Award, English 8, Spanish 8.

Nyah Foy - Music 8.

Cameron Kelly - Academic Achievement 8.

Dexter Kernan - Principal's List, Culinary.

Lilly Kozera - Principal's List.

Nina Lapine - Principal's List, Chorus 8 Excellence Award, English 8, Integrated Algebra, SS8, NYS Attorney General Triple C.

Ryan Marano - STEM 7/8.

Miranda Moffitt - Principal's List, Enriched Art, Tech 8, Outstanding Student 8, NYS Comptroller's Award.

Gabrielle Morano - Principal's List, Art 8.

Clover Murphy - Principal's List, Earth Science.

Sean Murphy - Most Improved Instrumentalist 8.

Annabelle VanDeWater - NYS Attorney General Triple C.

Lincoln VanDeWater - Outstanding Instrumentalist 8, Math 8.

Thomas VanDeWater - Health 8, PE 8, STEM 7/8.

Hailey Zamborsky - FACS 8.



5th Graders Get Ready to Attend Middle School

Before the June 15 Moving Up Ceremony was held, fifth graders from Alden Place were able to tour the building in which they will be continuing their studies in the fall.

Millbrook Middle School Principal Steven Cabello and School Counselor Kelly Mahoney talked with students about the differences between elementary and middle school and described what a typical day will look like.

Cabello was most impressed with the students' behavior.

“It’s great how polite and respectful the group was,” Cabello recalled. “They were a little wide-eyed of course, but by and large, they got very comfortable by the time they got to the hallways.”

Cabello noted how he and other staff have made themselves known to the future

Math Coach Introduced

Elementary teachers from both Elm Drive and Alden Place gathered between June 21 and 22 to tackle different ways to teach math to the district’s young minds with an expert in the subject.

Dr. Anchala Sobrin, Regional Coordinator of Mathematics, Data, and Grant Programming at Putnam Northern Westchester BOCES, led the professional development session and will be working in the district throughout the 2023-2024 school year as a math coach. She will also be available to assist teachers who applied for summer math grants.

As teachers begin their second year using Eureka Math, they will build their repertoire of strategies supporting students’ mathematical thinking and problem solving skills.

“She will provide teachers the opportunity to plan and design lessons and assessments to track student understanding,”



Executive Director of Instruction and Community Relations Dr. Amy Watkins said. “She will also model a variety of ways to deliver math instruction to deepen student understanding.”

After spending four years as STEM Director in the Peekskill City School District, Sobrin joined BOCES because she wanted to work more directly with teachers and students.

“I want to be where the kids are, where the impact is,” Sobrin said. “This was calling out to me because math is my passion.”

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Seniors Awarded \$125,000 in Scholarships

Millbrook High School seniors have a reason to celebrate – they were awarded 38 scholarships worth more than \$125,000, as well as numerous awards honoring achievements in academics and sports.

Many of the scholarships came from local organizations such as the Millbrook Rotary and the Millbrook Teachers' Association. MHS Principal Eric Seipp credits School Counselor Lauren Prince for spearheading the scholarship process and for providing opportunities for the students.

Seipp is consistently amazed by students' efforts in the classroom and their volunteer work that benefits the community. "It's a time to recognize and honor the dedication, perseverance and excellence of our students," Seipp said.

"Our students have shown a remarkable dedication to their studies and making a positive impact in the world."

Athletic Director and Dean of Students Al Hammell thanked the student athletes for showing good sportsmanship and having an outstanding work ethic that will make them successful.

"What makes Millbrook such a special place in terms of athletic programs is the quality of our student athletes," Hammell said. "It's impressive to see the number of student athletes that we have who carry that 90 average or higher."

Aliza Lewis won the Ceramics and Functional Art and English 12 – DCC College Connections 101 awards, the latter of which she was especially proud to earn.

"English has always been my favorite subject and I just really enjoyed that class," Lewis said. "I'm super excited."

Dominic Lapine applied for many scholarships and was thrilled to receive the Matthew Martell Memorial Scholarship, which will come in handy when he attends Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, where he will major in aeronautical science.

"I'm very happy with what I accomplished," Lapine said. "I really worked hard for it."

Lapine thanked his teachers and district staff for their guidance and encouraging him to take chances when they arose.

"I appreciate everything they did for me," Lapine said. "They gave me a lot of chances to do well."

LIST OF AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Congratulations to the students who received the awards listed below:

Academic Excellence Awards

Ceramics & Functional Art
English 12 – DCC College Connections 101
Independent Study in Graphic Design
Financial Math
Outstanding Senior Fine Arts
Performing Arts – Instrumental for Jazz
Government & Economics
English 12 – DCC
College Connections 102
Performing Arts – Instrumental for Band
Financial Math
Business Law
12th Grade Physical Education
AP Physics
AP Geography
English 12 – DCC College Connections 101
Outstanding Senior Graphic Design
Independent Study in Fine Arts
DCC Biology 105 / 106
English 12
Introduction to Accounting
Spanish V / DCC College Connections
AP Government / DCC Connections
SUPA Forensics
French V / DCC College Connections
AP Calculus II / Marist College
Connections BC
AP Computer Science
PLTW – Digital Electronics
Pre-Calculus / Marist College
Sculpture
Performing Arts – Vocal
Speciality Awards
The George Hunter Brown Award
The Anderson Award
Triple A Award



Prism Award for School Service
Millbrook High School P.R.I.D.E. Award
Previously Awarded
The Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum Rendezvous with History High School Essay Contest
Dutchess County BOCES – Student of Distinction
Athletic Awards
Varsity Participation Awards
The Blazer Awards (In Boys Basketball, Girls Basketball, Volleyball, Baseball, Cheerleading, Softball, Boys Soccer, Girls Soccer, Track & Field, Winter Track and Cross Country)
Maser Award
Millbrook High School Senior Athletes of the Year
The Millbrook Tribute Garden
Merit Scholarship

The George T. Whalen, Jr. Foundation Scholarship
Bank of Millbrook Award
Millbrook PTO Scholarship
The John and Agnes Marona Scholarship
The MEF Scholarship
The MEF Outstanding Character Scholarship
VFW Millbrook Post #9008 Memorial Scholarship
Millbrook Rotary Club Scholarship
Volkert V.R. Mason Award
Colonel Robert W. Gunther Music Scholarship
Millbrook Historical Society – The Laurie Duncan Award
Benjamin C. Boice Scholarship
New York Blood Center Scholarship
The Merritt Bookstore Award
Arthur Williamson Award

Millbrook Teachers' Association
– NYSUT Association Scholarship
Millbrook Teachers' Association Scholarship
Millbrook Teachers' Association
– Valedictorian Award
Millbrook Teachers' Association
– Salutatorian Award
Millbrook Administrators' Association Scholarship
Millbrook Alumnae Association
Scholarship
The Gene Ferrio Scholarship
The Class of 2020 Scholarship
The Knights of Columbus Millbrook Council #381 Academic Award
Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley – The Michael P. Murphy Public Service Scholarship
Berkshire Taconic Foundation – Northeast Dutchess Scholarship
Lisa E.C. Alexander Memorial Scholarship
Lizzie Burch Award
Dr. Robert Krall Scholarship
The Millbrook Music Scholarship
The Matthew Martell Memorial Scholarship
NYS Academic Excellence Awards
State of New York Office of the Attorney General "Triple C" Award
Office of the State Comptroller Student Achievement Award
Theresa Farmer Scholarship
Thomas O. Vincent Memorial Scholarship
Mark A. Loiacono Memorial Award
Special Recognition

5th Graders Get Ready to Attend Middle School

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middle schoolers by attending plays and other events in their school to help ease the transition. Mahoney and School Psychologist Jennifer Obrizok have met with students who might have anxiety about moving up.



“We try to do things like meeting them where they’re at in their building,” Cabello said. To help ease parents’ minds, they were also given a tour of the school where they met with teachers and current MMS students who talked with them about their experience. In August, students will come back to get a head start on their studies.

“They can be here and ease into being a middle schooler,” Cabello said.

For Tommy Martin, he is both excited and nervous to start middle school and found that having a middle school buddy guiding him through school was helpful. He is interested in joining the art club.

“It helped for them to describe it and tell us the feel of it,” Martin said.

“It was intimidating how big the school was.”

Carly McKee enjoyed the tour she was given and felt at ease, as she spent time in the middle school building in first grade due to a mold issue at Alden. She plans to join the middle school band.

“I’m looking forward to everything,” McKee said.

Math Coach Introduced

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Watkins noted that Sobrin’s knowledge allows her to support teachers who provide basic math to students helping them become independent thinkers.

“She has a passion when it comes to providing rich, rigorous math instruction,” Watkins said.

Sobrin and the teachers discussed New York State’s Next Generation Mathematics Learning Standards, grade-level outcome and ways to customize Eureka to fit the needs of Millbrook, while still meeting state standards.

“Of all the programs out there to teach math, there is not one of them that is completely perfect,” Sobrin said. “We’ll figure out how we are going to extract from the program what our needs are to serve students.”

Teachers also participated in activities where they drew pictures in four square boxes and then used those pictures to explain what teaching math is like, as well as explaining what standards and curriculum look like.

Elm Pre-Kindergarten Teacher Aide AnnaMarie Muscari appreciated the opportunity to be trained alongside the teachers during the development and she found Sobrin to be an excellent trainer.

“She’s fantastic,” Muscari said of Sobrin. “It truly is a great opportunity for all of us.”

Elm Third Grade Teacher Jason Zmudosky found the development to be more than just jumping into the curriculum.

“It’s getting a broader perspective to begin with,” Zmudosky said. “I think that’s a good starting point.”

Zmudosky appreciates that Sobrin will be around throughout the year to answer any questions and to share her knowledge.

“It’s good to have a point person who is familiar with the curriculum,” Zmudosky said. “She’s someone else to lean on.”



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