

Growing Innovation



EVERYONE LOVES A WINNER

SUPERINTENDENT'S LETTER



Dear Region 12 Community,

What an incredible time to be part of Region 12 Schools! The theme of our district newsletter for the Spring of 2023 is Growing Innovation! The theme is fitting because Region 12 is experiencing an era of increasing enrollment coupled with a focus on innovative ways to enhance our schools. District enrollment has grown from 688 students in 2020 to 804 students in 2022, representing a 17% increase. Our latest projection report forecasts that the district will grow 10% in the coming decade to 884 students in 2032.

I am inspired to join the Region as a leader, learner, and listener as we collectively dream up the district's future. Our soon-to-be-completed long-range plan will guide this process of looking ahead. Region 12 is fortunate to have families, teachers, and a school board that understands education, not just as it has been and where it is now, but how it needs to evolve to meet the global challenges our children will face in a rapidly changing world.

Region 12 remains a leader in Litchfield County and the state of Connecticut, garnering awards and accolades from numerous organizations and top rankings in media outlets such as *US News & World Report* and Niche.com. Our students and teachers have worked hard to earn this lofty praise. However, these achievements inspire us to resist complacency and continually seek to introduce innovations that continue improving our children's educational experience as we strive to move from best-in-class to world-class. As the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus is credited with observing, "The only constant in life is change."

As we look beyond industrial age models of schooling and prepare students for uncharted futures, we are keenly aware that many of our students will work in jobs that do not presently exist. While that may be true, we are simultaneously preparing the next generation of doctors, lawyers, entrepreneurs, executives, small business owners, and educators. Even these existing professions continue to evolve in this period of exponential technological advancement. We refuse to stagnate, so innovation remains at the heart of Region 12.

I am quick to remind those who tell us that we need to prepare students for the 21st century that we are already nearly a quarter into the twenty-first century. Our students were all born in the 21st century. We are not only educating them for the future but also for the world they encounter today. That world requires more profound knowledge and more powerful critical thinking skills than ever before, as our students will tackle complex problems not easily solved with a quick Google search. We've been told for years that we could only improve students' lives if teachers thought outside the box. Now we find ourselves faced with a new reality, requiring educators to start rethinking the box altogether.

These are exciting times in Region 12 as we work alongside our students to re-imagine learning and allow rich, authentic opportunities to solve real-world problems. We are at the precipice of this journey. We will redesign our curriculum, programs, and learning spaces in the years to come to support innovation and to challenge our children to dream big and achieve excellence on the path to wherever their journeys may lead.

All forward,

Dr. Marc J. Gosselin Jr.
Superintendent of Schools

CHILDREN AS INTUITIVE INVESTIGATORS

By Principals Emily Rhew and Emily Judd



Have you ever wondered how doctors use robots to perform surgery or how the geosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere, and biosphere interact to impact life on Earth? Questions such as these are posed to our elementary students as they engage in learning through scientific exploration.

At the elementary level, students think and reason like scientists as they explore physical sciences, life sciences, Earth and space sciences, and engineering practices. Real-world phenomena are used to spark interest and ignite questions. The practice of raising questions guides exploration and investigation. This process requires our students to persevere, collaborate, adjust, and test their reasoning to develop claims supported by evidence.

In second grade, students investigate the different forces that shape the surface of the Earth and design solutions to limit the impact of erosion on this fictional community, which is located at the bottom of a hill. This is brought to life for our students as they create their own “community” using sand, rocks, and structures to mimic an environment. Subsequently, they use water to examine the impact it has on their individual environments. Students reflect and question how different aspects of their environment impact water flow and erosion.

Through the life sciences, third graders investigate the difference between genetic traits and traits that are influenced by the environment. Interpretation skills are used to identify how traits support an organism’s functioning. Students find this unit engaging as they explore their own inherited traits and those of animals and plants.

Our students in fourth grade explain the relationship between the speed of an object and the energy of that object, as well as predict the transfer of energy as a result of a collision between two objects. These ideas are realized by creating a vehicle restraint system for an “egg” passenger.

Fifth-grade students explore the ways robots are used in today’s world and their impact on society and the environment. Students learn about a variety of robotic components as they build, program, and test remotely controlled robots.



A rich science curriculum develops a core set of ideas while allowing for deep exploration of concepts that create meaning and grade-to-grade connections. Purposeful science opportunities propel our students toward greater knowledge while capturing their sense of wonder about the world around them.



GROWING INNOVATION

By Dr. Marc J. Gosselin Jr., Superintendent of Schools



We've received exciting news from demographer Dr. Peter Prowda about our student population over the next ten years. According to his projections, the total number of students in the district is expected to grow by 10.8%.

The forecast for student enrollment shows evolving trends across the district, with Burnham School expected to grow by 21% and Booth Free School following closely behind with a 12% increase in student enrollment. Washington Primary School (WPS) may experience a decline in its student population if trends hold during the next decade. As family patterns shift, WPS is forecasted to see a possible 20% decline in enrollment. This projected change allows us to restructure

our academic offerings to better align with the evolving needs of our student population. Overall, these projections show that things are changing, and we have a chance to make our schools better for everyone.

We are eagerly looking forward to the future and ensuring that students in Region 12 can start here and go anywhere in their journeys ahead. We know that to deliver on that promise, we must continually invest in our academic programs, music and art opportunities, growing agriscience programs, and athletic programs. Efforts to prepare our students for the world to come will require us to think far afield from our current academic program in expansive and innovative ways.

We want to continue to offer stellar learning spaces and commit to increasing our energy independence as we look forward. Therefore, Region 12 has applied for a grant to help fund the purchase of solar arrays that will allow us to harness renewable resources on our campuses to meet our energy needs while saving money and reducing our environmental impact. In addition, an on-site solar farm will offer an opportunity to help budding scientists and engineers learn about these technologies first-hand. Likewise, agriscience students will have the chance to learn how energy farming plays a role in planning land usage in farming and agricultural enterprises.



Investments in our planetarium have allowed us to offer a popular new astronomy course at Shepaug Valley School (SVS). This newly recharged learning space provides infinite opportunities for elementary and secondary students alike to deepen their understanding of space science as the reality of space serving as the new frontier comes squarely into focus regarding entrepreneurial ventures, economic opportunities, and national security.



Next is an investment to improve our media lab and video production space. With a state-of-the-art facility, we want to create an exciting learning environment where students can work on telling their stories through video. This medium continues to expand as a communication platform with distribution via television and web-based interfaces. An updated facility will offer increased opportunities to explore special effects, animation, and other advanced filmmaking techniques. Opportunities to develop proficiency in this technology will open infinite possibilities for future careers or areas of continued study for our students. Region 12 hopes to partner with area experts to help our students learn about broadcasting and video production. As we expand this area of our program, we plan to take advantage of our local access cable channel to share Region 12 events with the community and use

digital media to share our content with a global audience. Students can hone their skills with in-house options such as creating the Spartan Scope news program and broadcasting Shepaug sporting events.

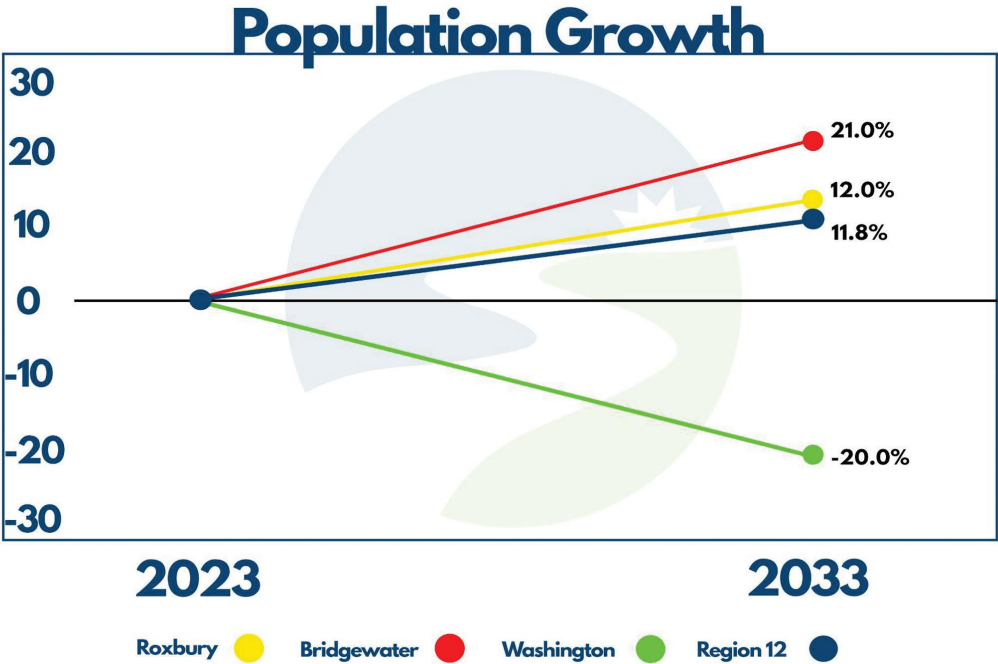
Our agriscience program continues to expand its array of learning opportunities. There is something for everyone, from food science to farming and small engines to sustainable agriculture. As we look into the future, we will continue to explore how our program can draw on its commitment to applied laboratory science, leadership, and work-based learning to prepare future chemists, veterinarians, government officials, entrepreneurs, bankers, international business leaders, teachers, and premier professionals in a variety of industries. The team is already adding new courses devoted to forestry and farm-to-table agriculture. In addition, we will continue pursuing future learning paths that include genetics, microbiology, engineering, and alternative sustainable food and energy production methods.

My vision is to continue striving toward creating a world-class math and science program that offers innovative new courses in areas such as nanotechnology, artificial intelligence and machine learning, cyber security, linear algebra, architecture, and more. Alongside our rich humanities program, enhanced science and math courses will open the doors for our graduates to go out into the world, ready to pursue any avenue they choose. SVS will continue to grow our program to meet or exceed the rigorous expectations found in programs like the International Baccalaureate.

Our innovative mindset must begin with an exceptional elementary program. We will continue to ensure that we offer unparalleled foundational skills as the building blocks for future success. Our principals are working to infuse a new program into our elementary schools that will foster design-thinking and project-based learning opportunities to unleash the creativity and passions of our young learners.

Innovation doesn't only apply to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Our elementary schools are also planning a World Explorers program incorporating world language and cultural studies to broaden our worldview and prepare our students to become global citizens.

The future is bright here in Region 12. Prepare to be amazed!



REACH PRESCHOOL

By Allyson O'Hara, Director of Pupil Personnel Services



The REACH preschool program at Washington Primary School has embarked on a new approach to our “shared classrooms”. Based on past success, additional literacy instruction has been added as a shared experience. Each preschool classroom has a mix of ages from each of our three towns. This practice, implemented a few years ago, allows our students to interact with students from their hometown, students with common interests and students that are the same age. This also allows our students to learn how to work with a new teacher.

In each classroom, literacy practice is embedded into daily activities. REACH teachers utilize the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (CT-ELDS) and various other curricula to target foundational reading skills like rhyming, identification of letters and sounds, recognition of initial sounds, and understanding compound words. This year the students have been put into groups according to their developmental levels for weekly shared literacy experiences. These shared literacy groups better prepare all students for the literacy expectations that await them

in kindergarten. Our three teachers have thoughtfully divided the REACH students into three age-appropriate groups to address literacy standards.

Mrs. Horan has our oldest students, our current four and five-year-olds, who will be attending kindergarten next year. These students practice how to recognize initial and some final sounds in words (i.e., B, bat, /b/) through letter/picture/sound connections. They work to identify the two words contained within compound words (i.e., rainbow = rain, bow) and practice identifying and creating rhymes through engaging games. The students are working on tasks individually and with partners to practice approaches implemented in the kindergarten classroom.



Mrs. Wescott has our older three-year-old and recently turned four-year-old students in her care. Her students initially learned the names of the friends in the group. They identify the letters in their own names and the initial sound of their name. Using the Foundations alphabet cards, students practice saying the letter name, saying the picture name, and creating the sound, (A, apple, /a/). Next, they learn a song with hand motions that accompanies the letters. Lastly, students recognize rhyming words and generate words that rhyme.

Mr. Weymouth has our youngest group of three-year-old students, some of our students only just turned three in the last few months of 2022. He has been working with this group to learn the Alphabet Song and play the “Ears Only” game. Students are asked to close their eyes and notice the sounds they hear. They answer questions like, “What do you hear?” and “Do you hear the same sound?” Additionally, they have been identifying rhyming words.

Lastly, they have been practicing initial phoneme isolation, saying words that begin with the sound of a specific letter (i.e.: /T/=top, ten, time).

When REACH teachers developed and implemented the innovative idea of “shared classrooms” for the youngest students in Region 12 years ago, we couldn’t have imagined the success of the approach nor all the reasons we could use the approach. The newest use of shared literacy groups should pay dividends for our students as they progress through our program and move into the kindergarten classrooms in the Region.



SHEPAUG VALLEY SCHOOL

BRINGING THE “REAL WORLD” INTO THE CLASSROOM

By Donald Schels, Principal

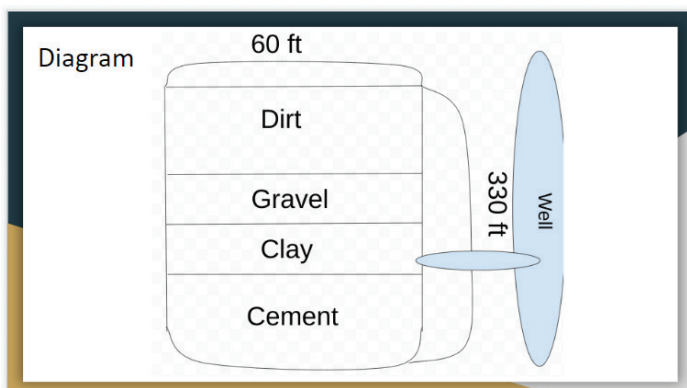
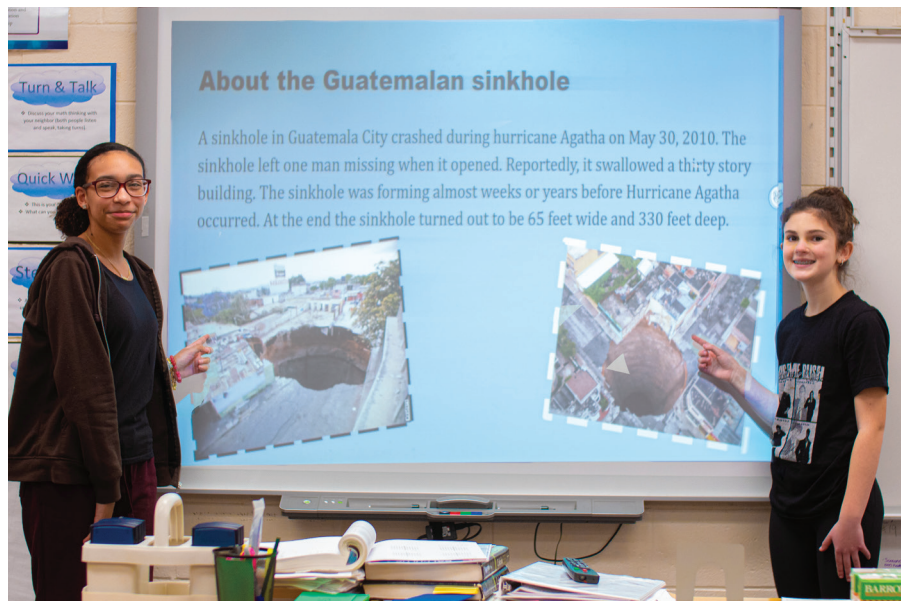


Shepaug Valley School has been working to ensure that we offer impactful lessons and relevant learning experiences. The following example shares how using real world contexts brings learning to life for our students.

Our eighth and ninth-grade Algebra I students were tasked with finding a solution to a real-world event. In 2010, a sinkhole collapsed in Guatemala. The students worked in teams to create a proposal for how they would fill the sinkhole and how much it would cost. They needed to research the materials and calculate the cost based on the size, or volume, of the sinkhole.

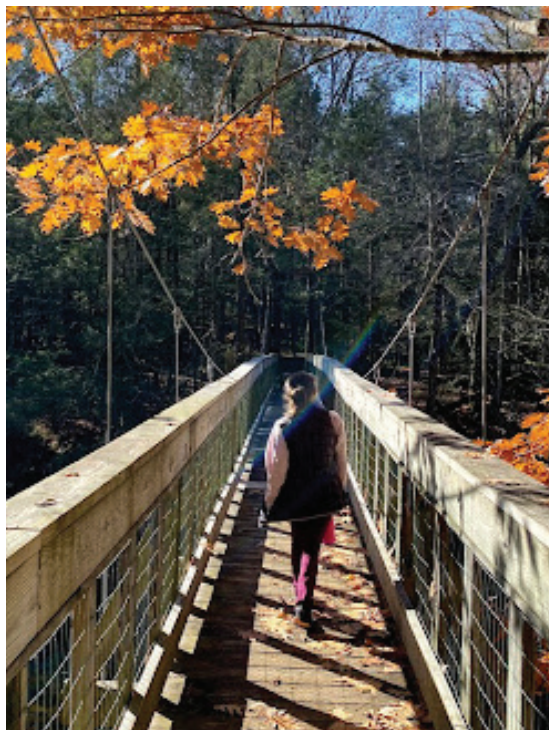
The teams then had to present their proposal to the class and provide constructive feedback to their peers. The students worked independently on this project with very little guidance from the teacher. They were given links to two articles on the sinkhole event and could choose to do additional research. They had to justify their research source and material choices, as well as demonstrate their calculations.

Samples from student presentations are included in the pictures below. Their critical thinking and presentation skills extended beyond the math classroom, thus truly simulating and exercising transferable problem-solving strategies within and beyond the walls of Shepaug.



SHEPAUG VALLEY PARTNERSHIP

By Tammy Beatty, Paraprofessional



Shepaug Valley Partnership (SVP) is a program of Region 12 that provides community-based secondary transition services for students between the ages of 18 to 22 years old. The program is an individualized program and it focuses on employment, post secondary education, daily living skills, recreation, and leisure, with community participation.

Our goal is to provide students with the greatest opportunities to prepare for an independent and fulfilling future by connecting them to community resources, empowering them, and strengthening their advocacy skills in order to navigate their life plans.

New this year, SVP has its own vehicle. This allows more opportunities for adult-based activities and work experiences for our students. The mail courier for the whole district is now an SVP student. You may see us as we go from school to school and throughout the community.

The flexibility of a program vehicle opens up more everyday adult activities, such as taking a hike on a warm day, stopping for a cup of coffee, and attending a local gym.

Adult fitness is part of SVP. Students start their first years with guided programs to fit their needs. They are given tools to help increase independence and choice. This year one of our students saw someone working with a personal trainer and expressed interest to work with a trainer. They now meet once a week for personal training sessions. Personal training has built confidence, introduced new exercises, and made working out fun.



“ Shepaug Valley Partnership allows our students to practice adult skills in real-world settings. The opportunity to take skills taught in a classroom environment and generalize them in community settings is when the real growth begins! ”

— Allyson O'Hara, Director of Pupil Personnel Services

COLLEGE AND CAREER CENTER

By Sophia Velez, Director of School Counseling
Lisa Roush, College & Career Coordinator

The College and Career Center is in full swing this school year with a new coordinator, Lisa Roush. The Center is part of the Counseling Department which helps augment the work of the counselors in providing students with information and programming that allows them to carve out their unique path beyond the doors of Shepaug. Our goal is to provide students with support in choosing a college or a future career that aligns with their interests and goals while preparing them for life after high school.

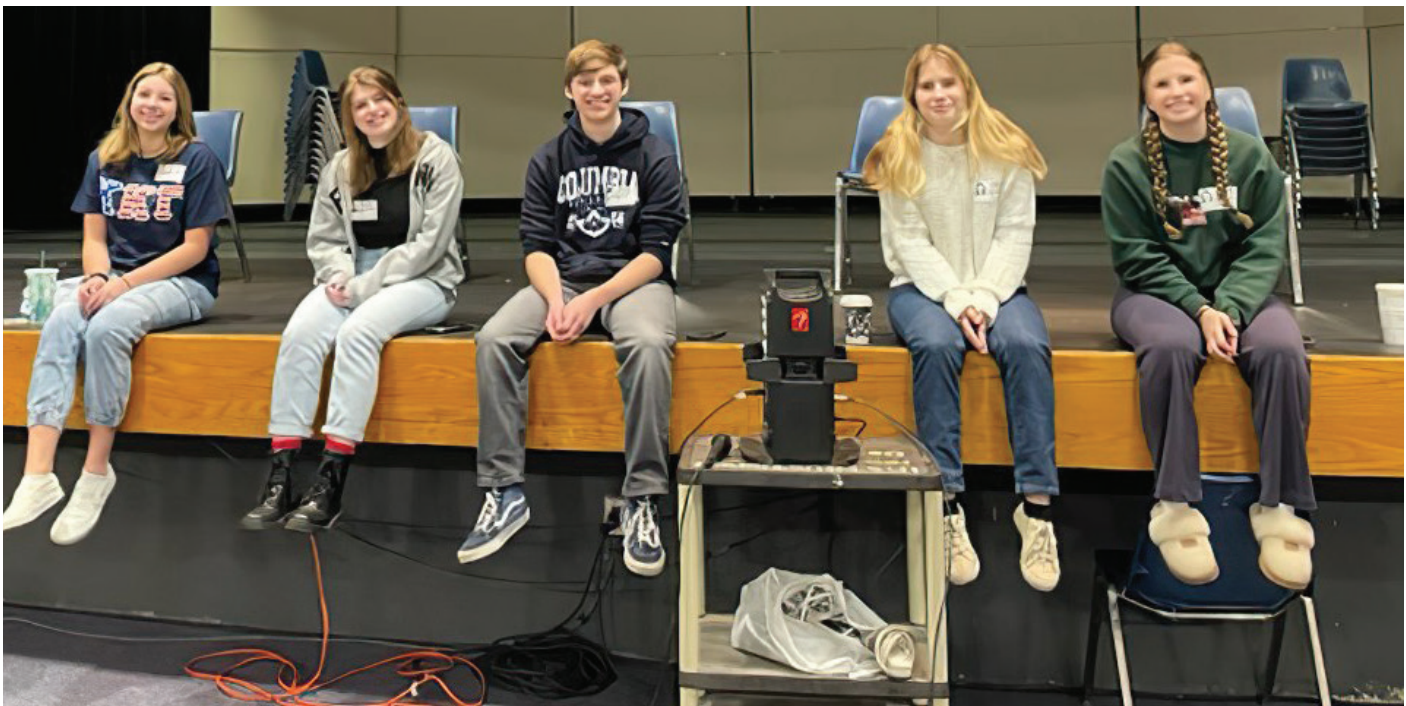
In the fall, the Center hosted 62 in-person college visits. Students were encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to speak with college representatives, ask questions and gain insight about the school, academic programs, extracurricular activities, and more. We also had representatives from area technical schools visit and present programs to our students about education in manufacturing technology and building the American workforce in different industries ranging from the skilled trades to the culinary arts.

In January, we welcomed five 2022 alumni back to speak to the current senior class on their early college experience. Janelle Frankland, University of Tennessee; Caroline Kibbe, Brown University; Wyatt King, Columbia University; Elaina Stumpf, Naugatuck Valley Community College; and Anika Stumpf, University of Massachusetts-Boston, shared what it was like being a freshman at their school. Even though each alum has had a different experience, each expressed that Shepaug had prepared them for college.

Continuing with the goal to help students find their path, the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test was administered on April 4 to sophomore, junior and senior students who wished to take it. This test is widely used as an aptitude test and for career exploration, not just for enlisting in the military.

Looking ahead to spring, the Center is already promoting spring college fairs in the area and encouraging current juniors to start the college search early. Senior year gets very busy and starting the planning process early helps alleviate some of the stress that seniors experience.

Please feel free to contact Lisa Roush at roushl@region-12.org if you have any questions or ideas for the College and Career Center.



AGRISCIENCE ACADEMY

By Tyler Cremeans, Director of Agriscience



The agriscience program staff continue to engage students in a variety of settings as spring and the outdoor growing season nears. Students in Animal Science have been busy monitoring the health of our animals, some who are set to be parents this spring. There seems to be the most excitement surrounding Peppermint Patty, the campus-favorite Belted Galloway Cow who gave birth on March 9, 2023. In addition, two of our goats, Blue and Cheerio, and two of our sheep, Thunder and Lightning, became parents. Students across grades 9-12 have been involved with caring for these animals which included visits by the local veterinarian to perform ultrasounds. The small animal lab continues to be busy housing our small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds.

Equine Science students continue to work with the six horses on campus, four of which will be heading back to their owners this spring. Students have developed their skills in handling, grooming, driving, tacking up, and even riding the horses this year in the agriscience program's indoor horse-riding arena. Chief and Legend, two Shepaug-owned horses, will reside on campus this summer where they will be cared for by students as part of their Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE). The program added a brand new livestock trailer for animal science courses as a way to transport animals to public events starting this summer. Come say hello at the Bridgewater Fair!

Agricultural Mechanics students have been busy with various projects in our shops from electrical wiring, plumbing and woodworking, to welding, engine repair and tractor restoration. Recently they participated in a community service project called Go Baby Go where they modified Power Wheels vehicles in partnership with EdAdvance and CCSU for young children in our community. This spring they will be working on turf maintenance and landscaping projects around the campus in addition to their first large-scale fabrication project.

Food Science students continue to work through various units involving the chemistry of food manufacturing, local foods, and global food policies. Recently, students had the chance to participate in a meat processing unit where Washington First Selectman Jim Brinton came to the school to show the students how to break down a pork carcass. Students made three types of sausage with Jim's help, and continue to use locally sourced meat products from Topland's Farm. Students use Shepaug greenhouse-grown vegetables and maple syrup produced right on campus.



Plant Science students have worked through the winter, as they continue to harvest crops produced in the program's student-constructed aquaponics system. These crops have been used in our food science courses as well as donated to local food banks. The students efforts were recently featured in an article in the *New Milford Spectrum*. They have constructed two additional hydroponic systems in the greenhouse this semester which will allow them to grow more leafy greens, tomatoes, and peppers. Students have been managing Shepaug's first sugar bush as maple syrup season comes to a close. So far, the students have boiled all of the sap into about three gallons of maple syrup which will be given to faculty and used in the food science courses. The program also plans to donate crops to Washington Primary School's garden and work with Burnham School on a composting project. Be on the lookout for our Mother's Day Plant Sale. Hanging baskets as well as starter vegetables for your garden will be available.

Thank you for your support of our agriscience program. We look forward to welcoming the newly accepted freshman class this fall.

AGRISCIENCE ACADEMY

The Agriscience Academy welcomes its newest member to the agriscience program. Peaches was born on March 9, 2023, at 5:00pm in the Shepaug livestock barn!



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

WASHINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

By Emily Judd, Principal



Interacting in meaningful ways inside and outside the classroom with community organizations supports student development and extends learning. At Washington Primary School, several partnerships have enriched learning and promoted health and safety for our students.

With a visit from Caceci Family Dentistry from New Milford, students learned how to keep smiles healthy by correctly brushing and flossing teeth, and through proper nutrition. Additionally, Sherri O'Dell, a nutritionist from Charlotte Hungerford Hospital, presented Fuel for the Future. Students learned the food categories and to exercise regularly. They learned that healthy eating could help our planet, too. Our long-standing partnership with the Washington Fire Department promoted fire safety. With a schoolwide visit to the firehouse, students gained a greater

understanding of the role of a firefighter and the function of specialized equipment. Using a real fire hose was lots of fun. Social and Emotional Safety was supported with a visit from the Center for Empowerment and Education located in Danbury. Through puppetry, storytelling and theater, students learned strategies to set personal boundaries, cope with big feelings and identify and respond to mean behaviors.

Other community connections helped our students explore new interests. Members of Shepaug's agriscience program visited our school and showed students how to plant rye grass to winterize the garden beds and restore nutrients to the soil. Shepaug students also partnered with our students to start seeds for our garden. Subsequently, vegetable and flower plants were planted in Judea Garden, a community garden accessible to all local families.

Each experience modeled the importance of service to others. Students soon realized that giving back to the community is a responsibility of an active and engaged citizen. With this inspiration, students visited the Warren Food Pantry and learned more about food insecurity. A drive was held, where we donated 320 food items to our local food pantry. In support of heart health and research, students raised money for the American Heart Association and stuffed over 100 heart-shaped pillows for Matthew's Heart of Hope Foundation which supports children recovering from heart surgery.



When students are engaged in real life experiences through neighboring connections, they build new skills, knowledge, enhance personal interests, and learn ways to give back to the community at large. We extend our gratitude to all the positive ways these caring partnerships influence our school.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

BOOTH FREE SCHOOL & BURNHAM SCHOOL

By Emily Rhew, Principal



Booth Free School and Burnham School collaborate throughout the year with numerous community organizations to help foster a sense of community, enhance learning, and create an authentic network within our classrooms. Some of the organizations we've worked with include our local land trusts, fire departments, libraries, Center for EcoTechnology, Shepaug alumni, and current Shepaug agriscience students.

The local land trusts and community members have brought many exciting initiatives to our schools that allow opportunities for our students to incorporate their artistic skills, while also supporting important causes, like the Follow the Forest art contest.

Bridgewater and Roxbury fire personnel taught our students the importance of having a safety plan and how to prevent fires from even starting. Students were able to see firsthand all the important safety equipment that firefighters use. In addition, we were able to see the faces and smiles that are beneath the helmets and masks.

Through hands-on instruction and guided activities by current agriscience students, past alumni, and the Center for EcoTechnology, our students have the opportunity to learn about the importance of composting and the positive impact it can make on our environment. We are starting our own composting program for food scraps that will then be used in our school gardens.

Our students have found through these experiences that by immersing and surrounding themselves with people who are dedicated to bettering the world, we gain a unique sense of purpose by serving those around us. As a result, our Booth Free and Burnham students have given back to our communities by collecting food for their local food pantries, creating decorative wreaths and flowers for our Bridgewater and Roxbury seniors, designing Valentine's cards for our local veterans, collecting money for Connecticut Children's Medical Center to support children battling cancer and donating pajamas for children facing adversity.

Through these partnerships, our students get to know their community and citizens, while also learning how they can give back to their community as well. There's a fulfilling feeling when you give back and contribute to society that is unparalleled.



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

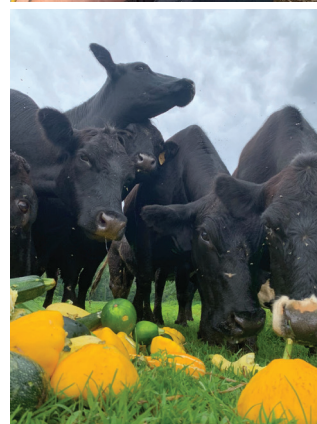
SHEPAUG VALLEY SCHOOL

By Michael Croft, Assistant Principal

Students enrolled in The Agriscience Academy at Shepaug have a three-part agriscience education experience. The first part is classroom learning: Animal Science, Equine Science, Food Science, Horticulture & Landscaping, Aquaponics & Natural Resources, and Power Structures & Technical Systems classes. The second is participation in one of the largest youth organizations in the US, the FFA (formerly Future Farmers of America). The third is, in many ways, the capstone of students' agriscience education, the Supervised Agriculture Experience (SAE). The SAE builds on a foundational premise of agriscience education: learning by doing. Students develop proposals for SAE and log 150 hours each year after their freshman year. Students can have multiple SAEs and they run the gamut: volunteer positions, home-based projects, paid jobs, entrepreneurial efforts, and more. Below is a small sample of the SAE projects now underway.

- Rachael Sterk is training to volunteer at the Beardsley Zoo. Rachael will be interpreting the zoo for visitors, taking field trips to tag birds, and more, as part of the Conservation Discovery Corps.
- Hailie Collette works at Ox Hollow Farm. Hailie cares for animals; cultivates and harvests vegetables; and works farm markets. She has logged over 250 hours!
- Mina Kheir-Eldin and Catalina Hortelano are building their own baking business (M&C Baking). Mina is also working for Sound View Engineers and Land Surveyors.
- Julia Kinoshita-McCauley is caring for animals and staffing farm markets for Fort Hill Farm.
- Ethan Cacace is volunteering with the Animal Welfare Society in New Milford, caring for animals, walking dogs, and having fun with cats. Ethan also spends time caring for the animals in the Shepaug barn after school.
- Amanda Phillip and Hadlie Marcoux are caring for the animals in the Shepaug barn after school.
- Jacob Samson works as a stable hand at Crossroads Equestrian Barn in Brewster. Jacob also helps care for the animals before and after school at the Shepaug barn.
- Daniel Millen is writing computer code for drones used for land surveying.
- Julia Wologodzew works at Averill Farm, harvesting fruit, working with customers at the cash register, and baking in the kitchen.
- Olivia "Bucky" Nunes is volunteering at Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk, using art to teach children about pollution and animals. Bucky will be trained to supervise the touch tank soon!
- Catharine Ramsay is breeding, hatching and selling quail.

With their SAE, students learn by doing, and they see that agriscience is everywhere!



SHEPAUG DRAMATICS



Congratulations to Shepaug Dramatics for a phenomenal production of *The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical*! The dedication and hard work of the entire cast and stage crew is truly admirable. Under the guidance of Director Beth Harvison, they created a memorable theatrical experience that will be remembered for years to come.

The theatrical arts play a significant role in the academic and personal growth of students. It teaches valuable life skills, such as teamwork, communication, creativity, and time management. The process of putting on a production involves countless hours of rehearsal, planning, and execution, which instills a sense of discipline and responsibility in students.

The elements of lighting, sound design, music, and acting are all crucial components that come together to create a seamless and captivating performance. Lighting sets the mood and tone, while sound design enhances the overall experience by providing a layer of depth and texture to the production. The music and acting work in harmony to bring the characters to life and evoke a range of emotions from the audience.

The hard work and dedication of Shepaug Dramatics is a testament to the importance of the theatrical arts in schools. It is a platform for students to express themselves creatively, and it fosters a sense of community and belonging that is unmatched.



CELEBRATING THE ARTS

SCHOLASTIC ART AWARDS

Student artwork is juried by professional artists and university art faculty and is selected on merit for inclusion in a state-wide art exhibition held at the Hartford Art School. Beyond the honor of being selected for this high quality exhibit, students may be awarded Gold or Silver keys and Honorable Mention Awards in each of 18 media categories. Two Shepaug students were chosen to exhibit their work in this year's CT Scholastic exhibit January 17th-23rd.

SILVER KEY WINNER
ISABEL EASLEY



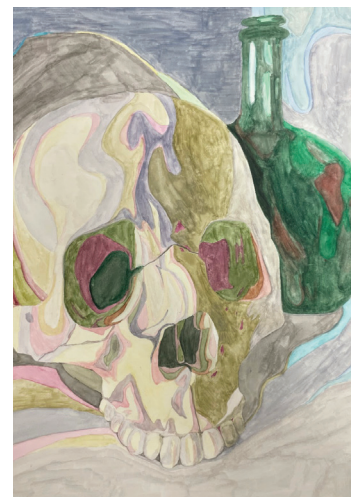
HONORABLE MENTION
ANNABELLE CHURYK



CAS ART AWARDS

The Connecticut Association of Schools annually honors two outstanding seniors from each of the member schools in the state who excel in the performing or visual arts. Students are chosen by their teachers and must possess the qualities of scholarship, leadership, and most importantly, must excel in one or more of the performing or visual arts.

Art has always played a role in Reagan Rivera's life. She has been drawing since she can remember and has always enjoyed it. Reagan's favorite medium is charcoal but has learned to love sculpture after taking a class at Shepaug. She says, "I loved how I was able to shape and create things exactly how I pictured them. Art has also allowed me to see and understand things from many other perspectives." She will be going to college to major in Criminology.



Abigail Creech is a strong leader within the High School Band. Her ability to guide, teach and perform is a great testament to her hardworking nature. She continues to amaze those around her not only with her playing but with her wonderful disposition and attitude. Abby has been a model student and an essential part of the program. She will be attending University of Missouri where she will pursue a career in history and journalism.

CELEBRATING THE ARTS

YOUNG PHOTOGRAPHERS

22-23 Celebration of Young Photographers Shepaug Winners
Four works were selected to be a part of the juried exhibit



GRIFFIN BLUM
"SPLASH OF COLOR"



ANNABELLE CHURYK
"OCEAN THRILL"



MAGGIE POUDER
"IN THE SHOW RING"



MAGGIE POUDER
"SPARKLING SPIKES"

CREATIVE WRITING

spring bloomed out of a dying winter
causing light to come from within
the warmth of the flowers
buzzing with chill in the air
alive in the morning dew
not deterred from the darkness of cold
snow slowly melting off of the sidewalks
inviting grass to grow between the treacherous cracks
spring bloomed out of the freezing air
bringing life to a dying world

-Ella Waupotic

CELEBRATING THE ARTS

CAS ELEMENTARY ART AWARDS

In February, six outstanding fifth-grade students from Region 12 received recognition for their excellence in the arts during the 24th Annual Elementary Celebration of the Arts. It felt extra special this year due to the fact that this event was held in person after being held virtually for the past two years, and missed altogether in 2020.

The Aqua Turf Club in Southington was all decked out for the occasion, complete with face painters, caricature artists, magicians, and a photo booth! The Connecticut Association of Schools, through its Elementary Arts Recognition Festival, annually honors students who have excelled in areas of visual or performing arts, and who exhibit high levels of citizenship and cooperative skills.

Every year, two award recipients are chosen from the highest grade level of each elementary school of our state - one for excellence in the visual arts and one for excellence in the performing arts. As a highlight of the evening, students, parents, educators and administrators from all over the state were entertained by members of Flock Theatre, who provided a very engaging and fun demonstration of six different types of puppetry. It was the perfect way to underscore the importance of the arts in our schools.

Congratulations to our students who were this year's recipients from Region 12.



Booth Free School
Peyton Livingston, Kiara Brew



Burnham School
Mabel Mariano, Madeline Toczylowski



Washington Primary School
Olivia Harris, Annavictoria Lara

CELEBRATING THE ARTS

MUSIC IS ELEMENTARY

In Region 12, we are fortunate to have an exceptional team of music teachers who foster a deep appreciation for the arts and inspire students of all ages to explore their musical potential through instrumental performance, singing, and dance.

The music teachers in our district regularly travel to each school, providing valuable assistance to both students and faculty. As a result, students are exposed to a wide variety of musical genres and techniques, allowing them to cultivate a well-rounded understanding and appreciation for music.

Twice a year, our students showcase their talents in the winter and spring concerts, where they perform alongside their peers and showcase their progress. We have also introduced Jam Session Concerts to our students, teaching them the art of improvisation and giving them the opportunity to showcase their creativity and talent.

Thanks to our dedicated music teachers and their commitment to providing an enriching musical education, our students are empowered to explore their passion for music and develop a lifelong love of the arts.”



ATHLETICS

By Matt Perachi, Athletic Director



NWU Shepaug Workhorses: Luke Nichols (sophomore), Nathan McVay (senior), Reed Woerner (sophomore), Kurt Woerner (freshman), Ryan Ceylan (freshman), Noah Paplauskas (freshman)

Fall 2022 was Shepaug's first season as a participant in the Northwest United football co-op team (NWU), and it was a success for all involved. The program consists of players from host school Oliver Wolcott Tech, Nonnewaug (which is the site of all practices and home games), Litchfield, Wamogo, and Shepaug. The Workhorses compete in the Connecticut Technical Conference (CTC).

During the 2021-22 school year, Wolcott Tech, Nonnewaug, and Wamogo joined forces, and the Northwest United program was born. Led by head coach Jennifer Garzone, the first and only female head football coach in Connecticut history, the Workhorses joined the CTC and compiled a 7-3 win/loss record during the fall 2021 athletic season.

Shepaug and Litchfield joined Northwest United for the fall 2022 season. After a summer of weight training and preseason conditioning, the Workhorses got the official season off to a great start on September 9 with a 52-16 victory against VG Techs (Vinal Tech/Goodwin Tech co-op).

The team continued their winning ways, rattling off nine consecutive victories before their regular season finale, a November 23 showdown between NWU and ATI (Abbott Tech/Immaculate co-op), who at the time was also unbeaten in the CTC. The game with ATI, which was anticipated to be a close contest, ended up being a 20-0 shutout win for the Workhorses, who finished the regular season at 10-0, and earned the honor of being CTC League Champions.

With an undefeated regular season, NWU was rewarded with a home CIAC Class MM quarterfinal game, hosting a strong Masuk team, who finished the regular season at 7-3. While the Workhorses came up short vs Masuk, a lot was accomplished during Shepaug's inaugural season. With great experience now under their belt and many players returning, the future is bright for Northwest United and Shepaug's team members.





Joe Moravsky, a member of the Shepaug Valley School Class of 2007, has earned great recognition and fame as a 10-year veteran and successful competitor on the internationally broadcast television show American Ninja Warrior, where he is known as The Weatherman. American Ninja Warrior (ANW) is an American sports entertainment reality show that features thousands of competitors attempting to complete a series of obstacle courses of increasing difficulty in various cities across the United States, in hopes of advancing to the national finals in Las Vegas and becoming the season's American Ninja Warrior.

Some of the highlights of Joe's ANW career include:

- finished second overall as a rookie in 2013
- Last Man Standing in 2014 and 2017
- selected and competing for Team USA for ANW's USA vs The World (Team USA competes against teams from other countries around the world)
- first and only ANW competitor to climb the Mega Wall three times

Joe grew up in Sherman and was very active while at Shepaug, participating in band, cross country, soccer, baseball, and basketball. Joe's younger sisters, Alexandra and Samantha, attended Shepaug, and all three of the Moravsky's were standout athletes and excellent students.

Joe turned his childhood fascination with the weather into a career, as he earned a degree in Broadcast Meteorology from Western Connecticut State University in 2012. While working as a television meteorologist for News 12 CT, Joe saw American Ninja Warrior on television, and decided to apply for a tryout. "When I applied for the show, I told them I was a weatherman and they were hooked! They thought I was going to be a novelty act but soon they realized I was a real athlete!" Joe said when talking about the start of his ANW career.

While Joe is very active in ANW as well as in leagues such as Ninja Sports Network and World Ninja League, he still works as a freelance meteorologist for News CT 12. When not in-season for ANW, Joe is the full-time manager at Stamford Ninja Academy, and he is soon to become a franchise owner in the company.

Joe has made multiple appearances at Shepaug since becoming a professional athlete and celebrity, and when asked about how his experiences at Shepaug influenced his future success, Joe stated, "The overall environment at Shepaug helped shape me into who I am today. I was guided in so many ways and I will be forever grateful."

Together with his wife Emily, Joe resides in Monroe with daughter Emily (7), and sons Jacob (5) and Dylan (2). When asked what advice he would give to current Shepaug students regarding how to be successful in life as an adult, Joe responded by saying, "Focus on your studies. I know it's tough, but Shepaug is the foundation to everything you're going to need. I would also say to cherish the four years you'll be at Shepaug. It goes by incredibly fast, which is just the beginning. Time moves faster and faster once you graduate, so be in the moment and be thankful for all you have!"

To learn more about Joe, The Weatherman, Moravsky, visit his website, joemoravsky.com.



ALUMNI NEWS



WILLY STEERS '11

I am an Air Battle Manager with the AWACS E3 Sentry. They fly in the back of the AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) and give the fighters and other aircraft intel about threats, both ground and air. In the new Top Gun movie, they showed the Navy version of the E3 with a woman manning a scope.

ANNE (HAAS) KALOGNOMOS '73

Retirement is still work, but with better benefits and hours.

STEPHEN WILLIAMS '74

I served four years in the USMC. I traveled the world working as a Field Service Engineer for Waterbury Farrel/Textron for eight years. I then trained as a EMT Paramedic and joined the Danbury Fire Department in 1987, working my way thru the ranks, ending my career after 34 years as the Assistant Chief of the department. My wife Ellen and I still live in Washington and our children Sarah ('14) and Stephen ('16) both graduated from Shepaug.

ROBIN FERET '83

I still live in the Shepaug area.

LAURA WEHMAN MILLER '85

Never stop learning! After years of being a woodwind player, I have started to learn to play the fiddle. Come see me at the Roxbury Pickin' and Fiddlin' on July 8, 2023!

EDRIS GOOLSBY HARRELL '89

I graduated from Wellesley College in 1993, majoring in psychology and Spanish. I earned my doctorate in school psychology in 2000 from Temple University. I currently work as a bilingual school psychologist, specializing in Autism assessments and advocating for multilingual learners. My husband Dave and I live in Wilmington, Delaware, where we raised our two children, Will and Elise, who are now attending college. In my free time, I participate in two book clubs, engage in social justice activities, paint, and volunteer at my Unitarian Universalist church.

CAITLIN GOOS '00

I welcomed my second son Griffin in June 2022. After 10 years in Boston, I recently moved back to the area and took a job working as Director of Talent and Culture at The Mayflower Inn & Spa.

BRAD PINKOS '00

I got married on October 22, 2022 to Heather Wiley. I am practicing dentistry at Litchfield Dental Associates in Litchfield, CT.

MEGAN HENRY '05

I retired from competing after over a decade with Team USA Skeleton and now am transitioning to be a mental performance coach for athletes of all ages aspiring to be elite. I have made multiple world championship teams and set world records and American records and was #1 in the US for many years. I have returned to graduate school to earn my sport psychology degree and am being mentored by Dr. Nate Zinsser, head of the Center of Enhanced Performance at West Point for 30 years. I am a certified High Flow Coach, Extreme Focus Coach, and Mental Performance Mastery Coach. I am also pursuing my Certified Mental Performance Consultant certification through the Association of Applied Sport Psychology. I continue to serve in the Army Reserve after nearly 14 years.

BRENDAN WELSH '16

I am a Navy Lieutenant serving as a Reserve Program Coordinator in Naples, Italy. I am responsible for planning, coordinating, and training reserves on operations as it relates to the mobilization function in a time of war. I also support logistics planning for the European and African theaters.

AMBER WRIGHT '16

I am currently in my second year working as the Grants and Compliance Specialist at Safe Futures, Inc., a domestic violence agency based in New London CT; and have raised nearly \$300,000 for the agency this fiscal year. I am proud to share that in August 2022, I and fellow Shepaug Class of 2016 alumni, Lydon Palella got engaged and welcomed a baby in March. Lydon is the Assistant Tax Collector for the Town of Winsted, CT since November 2022.

SIERRA SOLETSKY '18

I currently have been working full-time at the pharmaceutical company Arvinas in New Haven as a research scientist. I am working in the neuroscience department creating immunoassays to test the efficacy of drug compounds on various neurodegenerative diseases. I am also attending University of New Haven full time and pursuing my masters in cellular and molecular biology with a certificate in bioinformatics.

Early this fall, I presented at the Northeastern Association of Forensic Sciences annual meeting in Niagara Falls. I presented my undergraduate senior research on the accuracy and reliability of different common forensic science saliva identification tests to determine if any meet the standards to be presented in court for criminal cases. I found they do not hold up in practice as there are too many false positives to non-saliva compounds. I was chosen the winner of the best oral presentation for undergraduates at the conference.

SIENNA MOORE '20

I recently reached several academic goals. This semester I declared a second minor in French that includes French language, culture, and literary studies. I attribute much of my interest in French to my experience learning French at Shepaug with Madame Edel, who is always supportive and encouraging. I am pursuing an Honors major in Mathematics, a minor in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and a minor in French.

I have also been accepted into UConn's experiential global learning (study abroad) program. I will be spending one month this summer in Toulouse, France, taking French language and cultural classes, doing cultural activities (cooking classes, museums, films, etc.), spending time with a host family, and exploring the city.

In addition to being a full-time student, I work part-time at the UConn cafés where I just got promoted to the supervisor position and became the proud owner of a cat named Raya.

Shepaug Alumni Association

Our Mission is to reach, serve and engage alumni and their families; to foster connections between the school and its graduates, and to provide Shepaug with goodwill and support. Contact Scott Werkhoven, Alumni Coordinator, at SVSAlumni@region-12.org to join our mailing list.



Follow Shepaug Valley School Alumni on Facebook.

SHAPING FUTURE CITIZENS

MODEL UN

By Chris Dennis, Social Studies Teacher



Shepaug Valley School recently participated in the Harvard Model United Nations (HMUN). Held in the heart of Boston, Shepaug was one of only a few Connecticut public schools selected to the 70th session of Harvard Model United Nations. Twenty-six Shepaug students collaborated with students from about 200 secondary schools and 42 different countries to grapple with some of the most serious challenges in international relations. The conference lasted four days and there were approximately 3,200 students from around the globe in participation.

The club had exceptional senior student leadership who brought a wealth of experience and success to every meeting and the conference. They led by example and helped our newer members draft and finalize position papers to their committee assignments. They struck a delicate balance of patience, urgency, flexibility, and enthusiasm to develop experienced student delegates and mold first-time delegates. Successful delegates offer nuanced arguments, thoughtful reflections, and careful consideration of those with different perspectives. While at the conference, students served on committees in the spirit of the real United Nations and worked to build compromises and alliances with students from different countries.

This year, 24 students represented Ireland and two students represented Iran. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council, the Ireland country assignment gave our students a unique and significant role in addressing the most pressing issues that confront the United Nations. As a strong force and a sought-after ally by many other countries, our student delegates found themselves in situations where their voice, knowledge, and expertise became vital to passing resolutions. All student delegates spent countless hours learning as much as they could about Ireland and Iran, reading background guides, and writing position papers. Many of the committees our students served on were specialized and required extensive knowledge on economics, including but not limited to trade agreements, monetary policy, and foreign aid investment. These accomplishments are a product of the very good reputation that Shepaug students have carved out over the years at HMUN. This year's group only improved our standing.

Some of the committees that our students served on included the International Monetary Fund, the World Conference on Women, the United Nations Environmental Programme, the International Atomic Energy, the World Health Organization, and the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, among many others. While working to build resolutions to the most pressing issues in the world, students had opportunities to build lasting relationships with students from all over the world. Our students continue to perform at a high level and carry themselves with integrity and respect.

SHEPAUG HOSTS APPELLATE COURT ON CIRCUIT



Appellate Judge Nina F. Elgo meeting Peppermint Patty and Peaches

Region 12 was selected as a host site for the CT Judicial Branch's annual Appellate Court on Circuit program. This program brings real court cases on the road as it sets up actual courtrooms in high schools and colleges across the state to help educate and inspire students about the legal system. Thank you to Angela Macchiarulo and Don Schels for playing key roles in bringing this opportunity to Shepaug. We were visited by a team of folks from the Judiciary to plan the location and logistics of the event including everything from the room layout to technology to security. Both criminal and civil cases were heard.

The event took place on April 18th and was open to our students and to the public.



TYLER CREMEANS

Tyler Cremeans joined the Shepaug Valley School staff this year as the Director of The Agriscience Academy. He comes to the district after spending his first eight years at Nonnewaug High School serving as a teacher, FFA advisor, and department chair in their agriscience program. Some of his accomplishments included building Nonnewaug's aquaculture and fisheries sciences program as well as co-creating their highly-recognized Farm-to-Table course. He plans on incorporating both of these courses within Shepaug's agriscience program and has already made progress with students this year by constructing the first aquaponics system that is currently running in the school's greenhouse.

Other goals for the district are to continue to grow the agriscience program across all areas - student recruitment, retention, facilities, curriculum, and teacher development among others.

Tyler received his Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Education from The Pennsylvania State University, Master's degree in Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences from the University of Florida, and he completed his Sixth-Year certificate in Educational Leadership from the University of Bridgeport.

SOPHIA VELEZ

As the new Director of School Counseling this year, Sophia Velez is excited to be a part of the Shepaug community. Sophia has come to Shepaug after serving as a school counselor for four years and Director of School Counseling for eight years at Oxford High School. During her tenure, she oversaw the implementation of the school counseling programming, served as Testing Coordinator and led a number of school-based and district-level committees.

Prior to her career in school counseling, Sophia earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Fairfield University, and a Masters of Science in School Counseling from Central Connecticut State University. In 2017, she completed her Sixth-year certificate in Educational Leadership through Southern Connecticut State University. Sophia currently lives with her fiancé in Waterbury. Her hobbies include running, hiking, cooking and traveling. Sophia's vision for Region 12 is to ensure equitable access to education for all students through the delivery of a comprehensive school counseling program.



TEN MINUTES WITH AMBER



As the new Librarian at Shepaug Valley School, Amber Lamothe is excited to share her love of books, reading, and learning with the students and staff. When Superintendent Marc Gosselin posed some questions to her, she was eager to discuss her background in library science, as well as her philosophy on creating a welcoming library space that fosters curiosity and creativity.

1. What did you do before you came to Shepaug?

I was a sixth grade English Language Arts teacher at Bethel Middle School. Interestingly, before I became a teacher, I worked for the Town of Washington. That must be why coming to Shepaug feels like my homecoming!

2. What do you love about Region 12?

I love the dedication that Region 12 staff has to supporting all students, and I'm proud to be a part of that. Most importantly, I love working with Region 12 students! They're creative, curious, innovative, and intelligent learners!

3. How do libraries support schools?

Libraries support schools in a myriad of ways! From curating and purchasing digital and print resources that support the learning of both staff and students to remaining current with the best educational technology and practices. Libraries offer curriculum development and support services, co-teaching opportunities, information and media literacy instruction, reader's advisory services, community building activities, collaborative learning experiences, Makerspace and other STEAM activities, educational technology integration, and more! The library is the learning hub of the school and can transform to meet any need that the school community may ask of it.

4. What is new about libraries in schools today?

So much! School libraries across the country are facing many challenges. What remains constant in the face of these challenges is the way the library remains unwavering in its commitment to supporting students. Educational technology is constantly evolving. School libraries are at the forefront of navigating AI technologies, like ChatGPT, and its impacts on learning. One of the biggest developments in school libraries is adapting library programming and services to meet the needs of today's advancements and demands. School libraries are not the same as they were 30 years ago; they have had to evolve to stay current and offer what students are asking for and requiring. The majority of school libraries are shifting away from the quiet stereotype that they are normally associated with, to a busy and robust center for learning needs—which is called a Library Learning Commons.

5. What inspired you to become a librarian?

My passion for books and literacy—including information and media literacy. My former students also inspired me to become a Library Media Specialist, as they were always telling me my love for learning and reading was (and still is) infectious. I hope I can help to ignite that love for learning in our Region 12 students.

6. What advice do you have for aspiring school librarians?

Be prepared to be a jack-of-all-trades! Every skill that you have—and can learn—will be helpful and called into use! Having an understanding of curriculum and learning will be deeply beneficial in your role as a Library Media Specialist, as you interact with and support all staff and students in your building. Really lean into your love of learning because we have so much to keep up with and share with our colleagues and students.

7. What is your favorite book?

Ah, the most difficult question! The answer changes frequently, and depends on many factors. I have favorites in different genres, and by different authors. My favorite author list remains pretty consistent: Neil Gaiman, Kwame Alexander, Gordon Korman, Nic Stone, Jason Reynolds, Kelly Yang, Stephen King, Tiffany D. Jackson, Stephen Graham Jones, and of course TJ Klune!

8. Do you have any hobbies or interests outside of school?

I honestly do love reading, and you'll find me curled up with a book whenever I have the chance. I love spending time with my family and friends (including pets), attending concerts (summer is known as Concert Season in my house), modifying my Jeep, and doing anything outside—especially hiking.

RETIREMENTS

Thank you for your years of service. We wish our retirees well in their next journey.



Cindy Cossuto
Paraprofessional
Shepaug Valley School



Connie Ho
Assistant to Facilities Director
Central Office



Leslie Holst-Grubbe
World Language Teacher
Shepaug Valley School



Laura Horrigan
Secretary to the Principal
Booth Free School



Nancy Knapp
Secretary
Shepaug Valley School



Celine Morosky
Cafeteria
Shepaug Valley School



Mark Stanwich
Custodian
Shepaug Valley School



Reach out to us!

Follow Region 12 for updates and information www.region-12.org

Instagram: @region12schools Twitter: @ShepaugRSD12 YouTube: youtube.com/Region12Schools Facebook: Shepaug Regional School District 12

CONGRATULATIONS



Congratulations to the Shepaug Boys Basketball team for their first appearance in the CIAC State Championship game since 1983.

The whole community came together to support the team. Buses transported student and community fans to Mohegan Sun to cheer on the team. The team bus was treated to special escort out of town by the Washington Volunteer Fire Department.

While the team fell short of the ultimate goal, their magical post-season run made everyone in the Shepaug community proud to be a Spartan, and we thank you for taking us along for the ride.

The Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors (CAAD) honored Matt Perachi at its annual conference for the CAAD “Distinguished Service Award”. The Distinguished Service Award is presented annually to an athletic administrator who has made significant contributions at the local and state levels. We are proud to have Matt on our team and appreciate his professionalism and dedication to high school athletics.

EVERYONE LOVES A WINNER

