

Tusker Nation

SOMERS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWS
FOR SCSD FAMILIES

Learning about MLK by Helping Others



Darcy O'Grady, Jack Corti, and Isabella Grisanti contribute essential articles of clothing to their classroom collection. It was donated to children in need in Westchester County.

Students at Primrose Elementary School celebrated Martin Luther King's legacy through journal writing, art projects, books, creating a timeline of notable events in his life, and reading some of his speeches.

First graders in Julianna Hatjygeorge and Samantha Berg's class also honored the civil rights leader through service.

"All week long we read books, listened to stories about Dr. King, the injustices he was fighting, and his message of peace," Hatjygeorge said. "We also looked at the experience of black and brown children during this time and how things were not fair for them and how that must have made them feel."

The class wrapped up the week with a Day of Service.

"During our day of service, I learned Martin Luther King Jr. fought for justice," said first-grader Noar Shabaj. "We also made Valentine's Day cards. I felt happy to help."

This year students collected new socks and underwear for The Sharing Shelf, a local organization that puts needed items into the hands of children in Westchester County. Students also spent time making Valentine's cards for service members overseas, as well as children in hospitals and adults at the Paramount Nursing Center in Somers to help brighten their day.

"We keep the conversation going in our classroom about equity, diversity, and empathy by connecting it to different celebrations and monthly recognitions throughout the year," Hatjygeorge said. "We hope this instills in our students a want to give back to their community well beyond 1st grade."

Fashionable Student to Student Mentoring



Middle school students work alongside their high school mentors creating mood boards.

"I am definitely taking this class in high school."

That was the sentiment during a recent afternoon in the Fashion Marketplace classroom at Somers High School, where middle school students dropped into the Fashion & Textile Arts Club for the first of three workshops aimed at piquing their interest in fashion.

According to Delia Martin, president of the Fashion & Textiles Club, the first workshop in November focused on making mood boards. "The mood board workshop was a success, and I was very impressed with the outcome," she said.

Nine middle school students arrived at 3:45 p.m. and spent the next hour and a half perusing through fashion magazines and grabbing ideas to create inspirational collages and themes led by their high school peers. "They seemed to enjoy creating the mood boards and did a great job and had a lot of creative ideas," Martin added.

The Club is hosting a total of three workshops, including fashion illustration and a sewing workshop. There are 18 spots for each of the remaining courses and Martin is hopeful they will be at least as popular as the first.

The mission of the Fashion & Textiles Arts Club is to promote and enhance knowledge in textile arts and fashion, as well as sponsor service activities that benefit the community. The club has its own set of officers and meets most Wednesdays after school for planning and organizing our events. Christine Brooks is the club advisor.

Martin was happy to host the workshops and act as a mentor to the younger students. It was her own similar experience that solidified her love of fashion and her desire to pursue a degree at the Fashion Institute of Technology and possibly a career in the bridal industry.

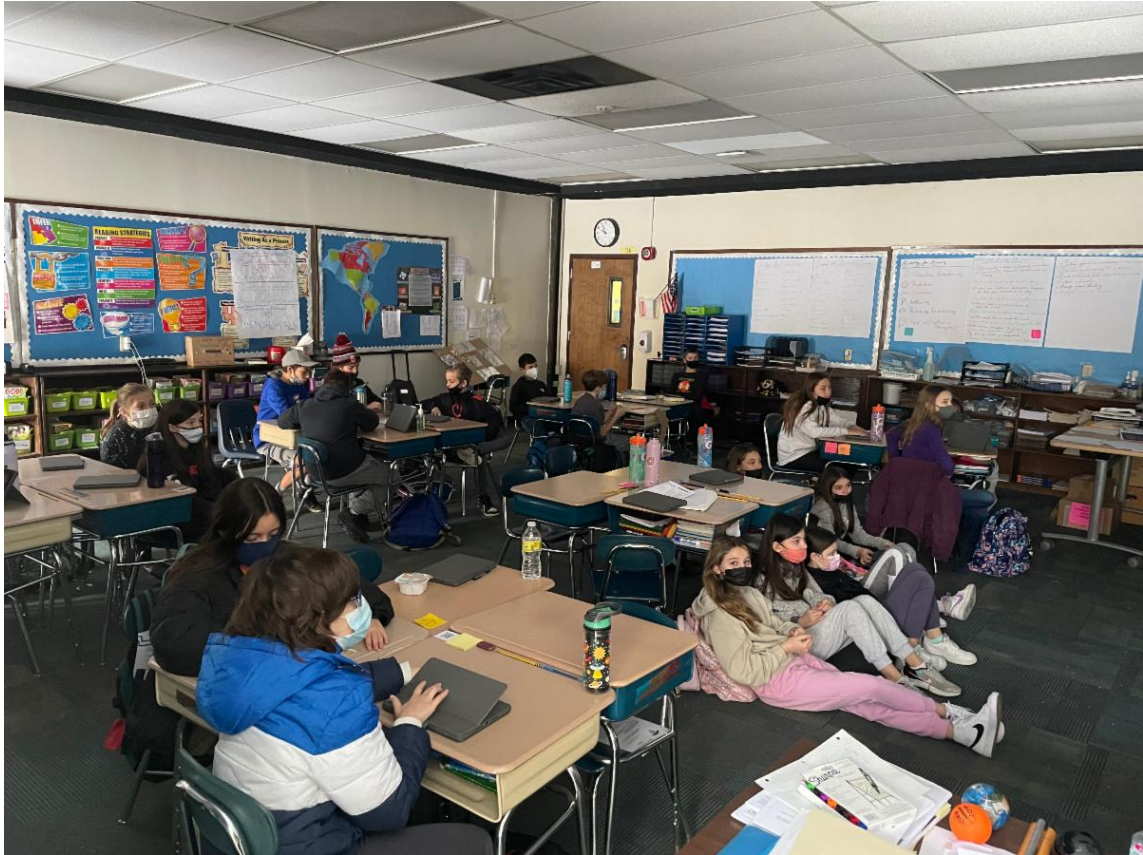
"I participated in a one-time fashion workshop where I made a mood board when I was in 6th grade, and I loved it," she said. "That event made me very excited to get to high school and take the fashion course."

She added that students are lucky to have the resources that the Somers fashion program provides to both high schoolers as well as the middle school students who come to the workshops.

“Most high schools do not offer a fashion course, especially a hands-on one like this where students can design and create their own collection,” she said.

Mentoring, she said, is a key aspect of the program. “I think it is important to educate these kids about fashion because it may inspire them to want to work in the fashion industry when they are older.”

Exploring a Disappeared Civilization



The virtual presentation hosted by the PNW BOCES Center for Environmental Education gave elementary students an overview of the Mayan civilization. Below, environmentalist Dan Novak shares his screen.

How can you study a people who have disappeared from civilization?

Somers Intermediate School fifth-graders put on their anthropologist lenses to look at the many aspects of the ancient Mayan civilization in a mini-program with the Putnam | Northern Westchester BOCES Center for Environmental Education.

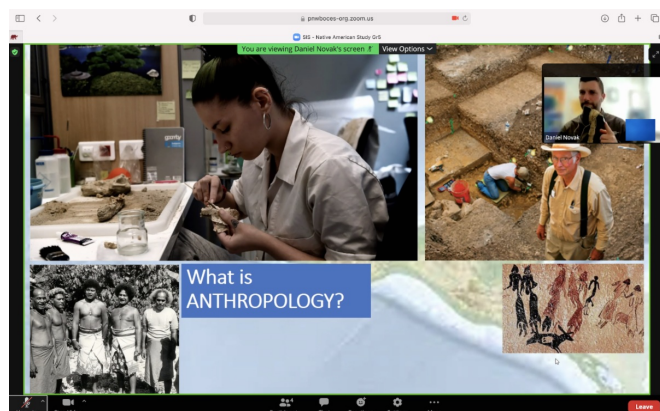
The virtual session, hosted by CEE environmentalist Dan Novak, gave the students an overview of where the Mayans lived related to present-day Central America, their culture, government, behavior, and how the now-extinct ancient civilization was incredibly advanced in its tools and technology.

Students learned about the various tiers of the Mayan society and pointed out differences in how the royalty was dressed in more colorful coverings than were the artisans and craftspeople.

They also learned about hieroglyphics and how the Mayans had an advanced written language and tools the culture used, including the stone ax, “one of the most important tools they used,” Novak said. He explained that the ancient multi-tiered temples and cities were all constructed by the Mayans who worked together clearing land amid the rainforest – a process called deforestation that is believed to have contributed to the civilization’s demise.

Student Adrian Allegretti said the presentation on the Mayans gave their class a lot of new insight. “I learned about how they hunted for food, what tools they used, what games they played, where the temples were and the hierarchy of the Mayans,” Allegretti said. “The presentation really hooked me to want to know more.”

Ava Parkin was most intrigued by the sudden vanishing of the culture from civilization.



“They just ‘poof!’ disappeared,” Parkin said. “They could have died from some problem like food shortage or something. But learning that was the most fascinating part to me.”

The fifth grade is beginning a unit on the Mayan culture and the CEE program will be a great help to students with their research, teacher Kelly Gronert said. “We are just beginning our nonfiction study of the Mayans,” she said. “We will be doing some research and eventually writing a nonfiction-guided Mayan piece.”

Dodd Wins Prestigious Science Research Award



Emily Dodd, standing outside of the research lab at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai in New York City.

Somers High School senior Emily Dodd has been recognized internationally for her science research by the Regeneron Talent Search competition. The program is the nation’s oldest and most prestigious science and math competition for high school seniors.

“I think it’s a good recognition to receive,” says Dodd, “because the competition encompasses the entire United States and eight other countries. It is a nice honor to be chosen.”

Dodd’s project, developed in her Science Research class, focuses on identifying treatments to combat learning and memory impairments in people with Parkinson's Disease. This is her second project in the class. The first focused on levels of depression in Parkinson’s Disease patients.

“My papa [grandfather] passed away from Parkinson’s the year before my sophomore year and I wanted to see if I could do anything to contribute to the research,” says Dodd.

Each year, nearly 2,000 students submit original research in scientific fields of study to the Regeneron competition and are judged by leading experts. This summer Dodd worked with a mentor in a research lab at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai in New York City, and once school started this fall, Dodd participated remotely and in the lab on

weekends.

“Emily spent countless hours working alongside the professionals at Mount Sinai in the summer of 2021 to conduct her research,” says Science Research advisor, Bill Maelia. “She is a tremendous student who has shown an exceptional amount of dedication and passion for science.”

As one of only 300 students selected in the Regeneron competition, Dodd receives \$2000 for herself and another \$2000 for STEM-related activities at Somers High School. Later this month, 40 of the 300 scholars will be named Regeneron Science Talent Search finalists. The finalists will then compete for more than \$1.8 million in awards during a week-long competition in March.

In addition to her love for science, Dodd is also a dedicated cellist. She plays in the orchestra and chamber orchestra at the high school and takes private lessons. She was also selected for Area All-State by the New York State School Music Association before it was canceled due to the pandemic. Next fall, Dodd will be a freshman at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. She chose the school for its strong research program and will be a biology major on the neuroscience track.

[Listen to Emily speak about her chosen field of research on the Tusker Talk podcast](#)

Solving Food Insecurity with Mobile Options



Middle school student Michael Monahan designs his food truck in the Technology and Engineering class.

Seventh and eighth graders at Somers Middle School tackled the issues of food insecurity and water scarcity in Matt Lugo’s Technology and Engineering Education class by brainstorming ways to incorporate hydroponic gardens on mobile food trucks.

The project was part of an International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme design unit called *Invention and Innovation to Help Others*. Lugo said students researched how communities deal with water scarcity and learned about the use of hydroponic gardens –

gardens without the use of soil – as well as vertical farming used in urban environments.

Students devised plans to address both food insecurity and water scarcity. Using Fusion 360 CAD (computer-aided design) software, the students designed food trucks with hydroponic systems that could help feed people in need.

“I gave the scenario and the students took off with their ideas,” Lugo said, adding that they used many MYP learner traits to accomplish their goal: thoughtful, caring, open-minded, and risk-taking.

Seventh-grader Millie McCormack designed Breakfast Haven, a food truck offering breakfast food that had a hydroponic system at the rear of the truck for easy access. The project, she explained, opened her eyes to the issue of food insecurity. “We watched a video of a struggling mom who was having trouble finding good food to feed her children,” she said.

McCormack added that she thought the idea of a hydroponic food truck would benefit any community, especially where there are schools. “I think it would be very helpful for families, even here in Somers, to have access to a food truck that has healthy, well-made food at a low price,” she said.



The Somers PTA has funded many projects already this school year.

Primrose PTA has provided a new outdoor learning space, Tusker Circle, and supported the One Book One School reading initiative where the entire school reads the same book at the same time.

SIS PTA has funded an afterschool World Language Club and will be funding a Krav Maga presentation to engage students during PE Class. Students will learn self-esteem strategies, strengthen their confidence, and how to handle bullying.

SMS PTA has funded book clubs and flexible seating.

SEPTA has sponsored the presentations "Dyslexia and Reading Disabilities", "Writing SMART Goals", and "Addressing Social-Emotional Learning Complexities in Neurodiverse Learners".

SHS PTSA has funded grants for whiteboard tables used in a math classroom to promote collaboration and small group instruction. Students with funds from the PTSA built a chain saw cabinet, drill cabinet, and a workbench wall.

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