

# Tusker Nation

SOMERS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWS  
FOR SCSD FAMILIES

## Celebrating Different Aspects of Hispanic Heritage



***The members of the middle school International Club gather in front of their colorful bulletin board featuring Frida Kahlo and her contributions to art and her Hispanic heritage.***

The brightly colored paper flowers glow in the center hallway at Somers Middle School. They crown a larger-than-life silhouette of artist Frida Kahlo, the flowers a signature element of her self-portraits. The bulletin board was created by the middle school International Club for Hispanic Heritage Month which took place this year from September 15 to October 15.

“We chose to focus on Frida Kahlo because she made a big impact on the Hispanic community,” says International Club member Isabella Wissa. “We’re trying to spread awareness and share what Hispanic heritage month is all about.”

The bulletin board includes pictures of Kahlo and her art, as well as important facts about her contributions to different aspects of Hispanic cultures.

“During Hispanic Heritage Month,” says club co-advisor Angie Gottlieb, “Students were very engaged and curious in their understanding of all the unique and wonderful heritages and customs that flourish in the Spanish speaking world. “It is wonderful to witness how they truly work together to educate each other on their quest for intercultural awareness and respect.”

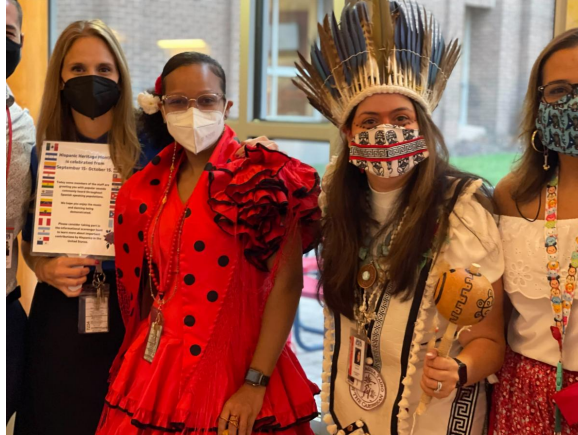
The International Club meets every other week and has grown to at least thirty members under the leadership of Gottlieb and her co-advisor, Annette Soares. The Club focuses on different cultural topics and traditions each month.

“It is important to understand other traditions, not just your own or those of the world language you are taking in school,” says eighth grader Jimmy Gallivan.

“We celebrate all cultures,” adds eighth grader Mia Paulmeno.

“It is important to have this club here at the middle school,” says Soares, “Because one of the district's goals is to create Global Citizens. We strongly believe the International Club will help our students become caring young people who help create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect for one another.”

Somers High School students, teachers, and staff celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month in many different ways, including a scavenger hunt that led to the exploration of different facets of Hispanic Heritage in a variety of countries. Students and teachers welcomed students to school one day in traditional and ceremonial attire and with Spanish language music. Principal Mark Bayer jumped right into the festivities, **showing off his dance moves** with world language teacher Amantina Reyes.



## Signs of Morning Meeting



***Learning sign language during their morning meeting helps fifth grade students settle into the day, and sets the tone for a respectful class community.***

Building a sense of community and setting the tone for a respectful class culture are just some of the ways a brief morning meeting benefits the students in Joe Benedetto's fifth grade class at Somers Intermediate School.

Each morning when students arrive in class, the fifth graders unpack and decompress a little before the start of the day with a 20-minute morning meeting. Oftentimes, it begins with a quick riddle from their teacher who may then segue into topics they discussed the day before. Recently, they have used the morning meeting to do something out of the ordinary – learning American Sign Language.

Students spend time each morning learning basic words and phrases and communicate with each other as well as their teacher. With the help of a video projected on a Smart Board, Benedetto and his students engage in a quick game of sign language memory. Already, they have mastered the signs for some common words and phrases like water, Band-Aid, bathroom, hungry, thank you. They also have learned many other common words like hello, yes, no, I need, what, hungry, see you later, help and thank you. "I like that I am learning sign language," said fifth grader Jordin.

Hudson, another student, agreed and added that the morning meeting is a great way to ease into the day. "I like to have some extra time in the morning learning new signs before class starts," Hudson said.

The morning meeting began several years ago as part of the responsive classroom movement. Benedetto said he has used it for many years because of the benefits to each student's social and emotional needs.

"It's a daily check in on the emotional state of the children and having everyone being recognized creates feelings of significance and belonging," he said.

---

## Rallying Behind the Camarra Family



***Teal "rally" towels are waved at a varsity home football game, in honor of teacher Christine Camarra, who passed away in September.***

The sea of teal towels waving in the Somers High School stadium brought tears to the eyes of many at a recent Friday night varsity football game. The "rally" towels were in honor of Christine Camarra, a Somers elementary school teacher who passed away last month after a battle with ovarian cancer.

"She was strong and determined," says Bennett Leitner, a high school senior and former student of Camarra's, who spoke at halftime and led a moment of silence for his beloved teacher. "I credit her with inspiring me."

Leitner, along with fellow varsity soccer captains Max Hechler, Jake Rinna, and Ethan Cohen, sold the teal towels as a fundraiser in support of the Camarra family. Teal is the color of ovarian cancer awareness. Christine's husband, George, is also a teacher at Somers Intermediate School. The boys publicized the sale of the towels on social media and during morning announcements encouraged students to buy a towel for two dollars during lunch periods.

"We thought it was the most convenient thing to do for players, students, and at same time have a big impact in raising awareness for ovarian cancer and the loss of Mrs. Camarra," says Leitner.

Nearly 400 towels sold in minutes, and many students chose to donate additional money. In total, the effort raised nearly \$1,000 for the Camarra family.

"There are a few moments you always reflect on at the end of a school year with pride and happiness, moments that you see the best of the best in students," says high school dean of students Marc Hattem, who taught at Somers Intermediate School with Christine Camarra for many years. "When I look back on this year, the actions of the boys will most likely be my fondest memory from the 2021-2022 school year."

"Mrs. Camarra always cared about her students," says Hechler. "She left the biggest impact on me and meant so much to the community."

Some football players wore the teal towel on their hips during their game, and soccer players have picked up the gesture by wearing teal tape around their wrists during their games. Hechler says he and other players plan to continue the remembrance for the rest of the season.

---

## Elementary Internet Kindness



***Ken Behling, library media specialist at Somers Intermediate School, shows students how to use the game Interland, which teaches children how to be kind and safe online.***

It's cool to be kind especially when you are learning to be internet awesome.

Fourth graders at Somers Intermediate School are working on their digital citizenship using an online game that promotes empathy, kindness, and positive internet skills. Library Media Specialist Kenneth Behling helped the students in Christina Staffu's class maneuver through the Kind Kingdom, part of Google's Interland game during a recent Library period.

Behling says the game teaches about digital safety and citizenship through an interactive and fun experience for students who become "internauts".

"They learn the importance of being an upstander and how to spread positive vibes on the internet," says Behling. "They explore the need for strong passwords, how to spot cyberbullies, hacking and internet scams."

Chiara M. says she likes the game because of its message.

"It teaches you to be kind," she said.

The library lesson coincides with the school wide "No Place for Hate" program, and Bullying Prevention Month.

---

## **Officer Brian Connects with Students**

Primrose Elementary School Resource Officer Brian Pavletich spent time in the kindergarten and first grade classrooms, giving students an introduction to his duties at their school. Second graders met Officer Brian when they were in kindergarten, but current first graders did not have the chance for the classroom visit last fall. Officer Brian explained to the students that his job as School Resource Officer is to keep everyone in the school safe. He brought a special book to read - "A Day with a Police Officer." He gave students an



explanation about everything from his uniform, to his police department patch, his badge and radio, his body camera and belt and all the other equipment he uses to keep people safe.

## Middle School PTA Hosts Back to School Parties

### SMS PTA Hosts Back to school Parties



The Somers Middle School PTA hosted a 6th grade and a 7th & 8th grade Back to School Party this month for students. The two separate events were held directly after school. Kids were able to enjoy snacks, a DJ, and many yard games. Some played their instruments. The yearbook club was busy getting a lot of action shots.

It was a joy watching kids be kids and they each had beautiful, sunny days. The SMS PTA would like to thank the parent volunteers and SMS administration and staff who made this event such a success.



**Somers Central School District**  
250 Route 202  
Somers, New York 10589  
914.277.2400  
[www.somersschools.org](http://www.somersschools.org)

