



The Panther Press

Spring 2024

MILLER PLACE UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

www.millerplace.k12.ny.us

Congratulations to Our Class of 2024 Valedictorian and Salutatorian

Becoming a high school valedictorian or salutatorian requires not only academic excellence but also extraordinary dedication and perseverance throughout one's educational journey. It demands rigorous coursework, consistent top performance, and often the sacrifice of personal time. Christopher Barton and Joseph Ritieni epitomize these attributes, and we are so proud to honor them here.

CHRISTOPHER BARTON, CLASS OF 2024 VALEDICTORIAN



Christopher Barton finishes his high school career with an outstanding GPA of 102.76. His academic achievements include being named a National Merit Finalist and qualifying for the prestigious American Invitational Mathematics Examination. He is a natural leader, serving for multiple years as president of the National Honor Society and Foreign Language National Honor Society as well as treasurer of the student government. He is an active member of clubs such as Athletes Helping Athletes and Mathletes. A talented musician, Christopher played trumpet in the school's jazz and pep bands and is a member of the Tri-M Music Honor Society. Christopher plans to pursue engineering at Princeton University in the fall. His dedication, leadership, and academic prowess make him a standout member of the Class of 2024. Beyond academics, Christopher excelled in sports, serving as captain and top sprinter for both the winter and spring track teams. Additionally, he competed in nationwide ball hockey tournaments, where he captained the New York State team.

JOSEPH RITIENI, CLASS OF 2024 SALUTATORIAN



Joseph Ritieni boasts an impressive GPA of 101.20. With a passion for engineering, Joseph left his mark on various extracurricular activities. As president of the Service Club, he led impactful community initiatives. Additionally, he broke his school's model bridge efficiency record, crafting a bridge weighing 0.03 pounds capable of supporting over 45 pounds of sand. He served as treasurer for both the Foreign Language National Honor Society and the National Honor Society, showcasing his leadership and organizational skills. Joseph's dedication to excellence expanded outside the classroom and clubrooms and onto the fields of play, where he was a consistent member of the Sound Beach Soccer Club since a young age. Joseph plans to attend Binghamton University in the fall.

THANK YOU TO THE MILLER PLACE COMMUNITY

Thank you Miller Place Community for your unwavering support of our 2024-2025 school budget. This support allows us to continue our high-quality instruction and programs and maintain our facilities. Empowering excellence today, developing tomorrow's achievers, forever Miller Place proud.

A Message from Superintendent Seth Lipshie

Spring and warm weather have arrived, which signals that our end-of-year activities are right around the corner. Our year-end events celebrate our students' and our staff's milestones and achievements, which include awards ceremonies for our senior athletes, Academic Awards for our seniors and underclassmen, moving up ceremonies for the Andrew Muller Primary School 2nd grade class, the Laddie A. Decker Sound Beach School 5th grade class and the North Country Road Middle School 8th grade class.

It is with great pride that as a community we will have the opportunity to celebrate Miller Place School District's historic 50th graduating class on Wednesday, June 26 at 6 p.m. at the John Douglas Football Field. I have had the honor and pleasure to have participated in 33 of those 50 graduating classes and those graduates are our greatest accomplishments. Behind each of those graduates are compassionate and enthusiastic parents and guardians along with a dedicated and determined faculty and staff. As a community and school District, we have grown in the past five decades from humble beginnings to an exceptional school District. We continue to experience academic excellence, personal growth and unforgettable memories.

I hope to see you at one of our many end-of-year celebrations. As always, I look forward to working with students, parents, guardians and staff to continue to improve on our student success and continue to make Miller Place the best possible District.

A Message from the Board of Education

As we bid farewell to the chill of winter and welcome the warmth of spring, I'm thrilled to share some noteworthy thoughts from the Board of Education. Despite facing a challenging budget season (in which we have advocated on behalf of our district to Governor Hochul regarding some of the major state cuts to education and will continue to do so in the future), we have navigated it with success, ensuring no major cuts to programs or staff. This shows our unwavering commitment to providing a high-quality education while managing financial constraints responsibly.

During our Board of Education meeting in March, we presented to the community the academic performance results from last year's regents and AP exams. (You can find that presentation on our district website.) There were successful increases in student performance which shows that our efforts are yielding positive academic results. This progress is a testament to the hard work of our students, teachers and support staff!

As spring blooms and the school year draws to a close, we celebrate with you the myriad enriching activities that have unfolded and those yet to come. We wish our students well as they gear up for their last exams—finals, Regents and AP.

Let us continue to cultivate an atmosphere of support and encouragement, ensuring that each student's journey is marked by growth, achievement and fond memories that will endure for a lifetime.

Miller Place Proud!

Lisa Reitan

Miller Place Board of Education President

AROUND OUR SCHOOLS

ANDREW MULLER PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Autism Acceptance celebration at Andrew Muller Primary School in April was a heartening and inclusive affair. It commenced with Autism Acceptance Day, when both students and staff proudly adorned themselves in red, gold or blue attire, symbolizing solidarity and support for individuals with Autism. On Magnificent Thinker Tuesday, the beauty of diverse minds took center stage, encouraging everyone to express their uniqueness through fun hats or eccentric hairstyles. What's Your Passion Wednesday encouraged sharing and discussion during morning meeting, with students expressing their interests through attire, underscoring the profound passion often associated with Autism. The festivities continued with Neurodiversity Thursday, celebrating the richness of individual minds with vibrant rainbow or tie-dyed clothing, promoting acceptance of diverse cognitive experiences. The week concluded with Sensory Friendly Friday, when comfort was key as the school community donned pajamas or cozy attire, acknowledging and accommodating the sensory sensitivities often experienced by individuals with autism.



For so many young people, public schools are a cornerstone of societal integration and acceptance. They are pivotal in creating understanding and fostering inclusive environments for neurodiverse individuals. Miller Place School District places such emphasis on events like Autism Awareness Week because they raise awareness and cultivate empathy, compassion and acceptance among students, teachers and staff.

LADDIE A. DECKER SOUND BEACH SCHOOL

The bond between Laddie Decker Sound Beach School and its community flourished this spring with three captivating family-connect events orchestrated by the School Improvement Team. Third-grade students embarked on an enchanting global journey, starting their virtual adventure in the beautiful country of Ireland, a place of great importance to many in the Northeast. Superintendent of Schools Seth Lipshie kicked off the evening with a captivating reading, setting the stage for a series of literary and craft-filled adventures.

Additionally, fourth-grade students and their parents embraced the challenge of a mathematical escape room. Together, they navigated through math problems, striving to “save the penguins,” achieving success as every student triumphantly escaped. In another corner of the school, fifth-grade students and their families indulged in an exhilarating Family Game Night. A lively scavenger hunt led participants to various rooms hosting a plethora of games, from classics like Family Feud to traditional board games, ensuring entertainment for all.



There was also our inaugural Runway Show at LADSBS, organized by the Fashion Club Students, who added a glamorous touch to the school's events. Over the course of several meetings, students honed their design skills, from sketching garments to mastering basic sewing techniques. Working in groups, they meticulously crafted, embellished and fitted their creations to their designated models, showcasing their creativity and dedication on the runway.

AROUND OUR SCHOOLS

NORTH COUNTRY ROAD MIDDLE SCHOOL

Educators at North Country Road Middle School pride themselves on delivering a vibrant array of extracurricular activities that cultivate student engagement beyond the classroom. Those programs abound at NCRMS this spring; here's a look into just a few of them:

■ The Mock Trial Club

This group of potential future litigators showcased their exceptional talents at this year's Island-wide mock trial competition, held at Suffolk County Community College. Notably, the defense team secured victory against Smithtown Middle School, while the prosecution received honorable mention, a testament to their dedication and Ms. Sanatore's guidance.

■ Kindred Spirits Art Show

NCRMS was represented at the Kindred Spirits Art Show by eighth-grade student Gabrielle O'Connor and art teacher Nina Wood. Their works celebrated the shared passion for art among creators, showcasing the power of collaboration and creativity.

■ Community Outreach

Members of our National Junior Honor Society volunteered at Andrew's Top Run, a road race supporting the Andrew McMorris Foundation founded by NCRMS guidance counselor Mr. McMorris. Their efforts contributed to honoring Andrew's memory and promoting positive change. Additionally, the school welcomed Gail Ports, who shared her ALS advocacy journey through the Ride For Life initiative. Her visit inspired NCRMS's Lego League Team, Lil' Entropy, to fundraise, showcasing their commitment to making a difference.

■ Read Across America

We embraced the National Education Association's Read Across America initiative, with Ms. Cavaliere and NCRMS students visiting Andrew Muller Primary School to foster a love for reading among younger students.



MILLER PLACE HIGH SCHOOL

Miller Place High School's Robotics Team 514 recently showcased their skills at the FIRST Long Island Robotics Competition Regional Event, hosted at Hofstra University. Despite not advancing to the playoffs, the team demonstrated commendable performance, achieving a ranking of 24th out of 49 teams by the end of day one. At their peak, they soared to 9th place before ultimately securing the 18th spot at the conclusion of the tournament.

This impressive finish earned them a backup position for the playoffs. Furthermore, the team received the esteemed Team Spirit Award, distinguishing them as the epitome of camaraderie and enthusiasm among all 49 participating teams. Though the playoffs may not have been in their cards this time, their achievements and sportsmanship exemplify the values of FIRST, inspiring and recognizing excellence in science and technology.



MUSIC AND ARTS NEWS

From the Canvas to the Spotlight

The spring season brought significant recognition to young artists in Miller Place. The Suffolk County Art Leaders Association sponsored two consecutive student exhibitions at the Town of Babylon History Museum at Old Town Hall. The series kicked off with the All-County and Senior Scholarship Show, at which talented student-artist Emma Rosequist received an honorable mention for her mixed media drawing, "Beyond The Glass". Following was the All-County Children's Exhibition, where our art department achieved a record number of fourteen students in grades 3-8 selected to showcase their artwork.

Representing North Country Road Middle School, Ms. Wood and Ms. Miranda submitted pieces by Chloe Calderazzo, Alexa Callait, Alexa Garboski, Ava Lambo, Kate Xikis, Avery Blandi, Claire Roach, Jenna Kurian, and Victoria Necci. Laddie A. Decker Sound Beach School student-artists Margaret Doepp, RJ Boos, Zachary Zane, Katerina Spanionlas, Ainsley Vigliotta and Landon Chicon proudly displayed various forms of their artwork created in class with Mrs. Famiglietti.



Additionally, the Miller Place Art Department wishes to acknowledge the achievements of junior Gavin Sanfilippo. Earlier this year, Gavin was selected to apply for a spot in Adelphi's For the Love of Art program. This intensive art program offers high school students the opportunity to collaborate with industry professionals, expand their education and refine their craft. Gavin participated in a figure drawing course led by renowned portrait artist and TED Talk speaker Brooks Frederick. Additionally, Gavin's artwork was featured in exhibitions at The Atelier at Flowerfields and the Parish Museum, where he received second place recognition for his portrait of an Egyptian mask. The District eagerly anticipates celebrating his achievements as he progresses into his senior year.

Panther Players Put Magical Spin on *Once Upon a Mattress*

Once Upon a Mattress has been delighting audiences since it debuted on Broadway over 60 years ago. A humorous riff on the famous 1835 Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale "The Princess and the Pea," *Once Upon a Mattress* has also been a favorite of high school drama clubs for decades. Well, add the Miller Place Panther Players' production of this iconic musical to the list of famous adaptations, because our young thespians brought the house down.

Featuring a talented ensemble of students from ninth to twelfth grade, the cast, crew and pit worked tirelessly for months, honing their skills in music, lines, dances and set construction. Their collective effort brought the whimsical tale to life, enchanting audiences and leaving them with lasting memories. As the final curtain fell, applause echoed through the auditorium, celebrating the cast, crew and pit for their remarkable achievement.



Miller Place High School Jazz Ensemble Selected to Perform at Westbury Music Fair as One of the Best on Long Island

Congratulations to the MPHS Instrumental Jazz Ensemble for their stellar performance at the Westbury Music Fair for MADD's 3rd Annual Battle of the Bands. Sponsored by Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), the event brought together five of the best high school jazz ensembles in the region for a night of incredible music. At the event, James Loughlin, pictured to the right, won recognition for the "Best Drum Set Performance" of the evening. Pictured to the right of James is Director of the MPHS Jazz Band, Pat Isenberg.



ATHLETICS NEWS

Game Changers: Many Miller Place Student Athletes Rank Among Newsday's Very Best

The athletics department at Miller Place High School teems with talent. From the crack of the bat on the baseball and softball diamonds to the applause that rings out as our track athletes perform incredible displays of athleticism, our student athletes consistently demonstrate unparalleled skill, determination and sportsmanship. It's no surprise, therefore, when our student athletes garner recognition on platforms like *Newsday's* prestigious list of top student athletes. Join us in recognizing the following student athletes who were recognized this spring.

NEWSDAY TOP 100 – SOFTBALL

EMILY LOPEZ, Miller Place, 1B, Jr. Lopez flashes a strong glove at first base. The junior hit .609 with a .653 OBP, scored 27 runs and drove in 23.

LANEY VOMERO, Miller Place, SS, Soph. Vomero hit .535 with 23 RBIs, 30 runs and 12 extra-base hits as a freshman.

AVA ZICCHINELLI, Miller Place, P, Jr. Zicchinelli pitched to a 1.46 ERA and 0.87 WHIP with 164 strikeouts to earn Suffolk Small Schools Pitcher of the Year honors. The *Newsday* All-Long Island second-team selection batted .451 and scored 30 runs.



NEWSDAY TOP 50 – GIRLS TRACK & FIELD

JILLIAN SCULLY, Miller Place, Jr. Scully won the indoor shot-put state championship with a 42-11 ½ throw this March. She threw 131-11 for second in discus at the New Balance Outdoor Nationals last spring.

NEWSDAY TOP 100 – BASEBALL

NICK FRUSCO, Miller Place, P/1B, Jr. Last year, Frusco was 5-2 record with a 1.54 ERA, 93 strikeouts and just 17 walks in 45 ⅓ innings. He batted .385 with a 1.061 OPS.

ALEX STRICKLAND, Miller Place, P/SS, Sr. Strickland was 5-1 with a 2.43 ERA and 57 strikeouts in 40⅓ innings. Longwood University commit hit .329 with an .886 OPS and 19 RBIs.



NEWSDAY TOP 100 – GIRLS LACROSSE

OLIVIA COFFEY, Miller Place, M, Sr. The Stony Brook University commit is an outstanding finisher (39 goals) with amazing speed in the open field.

MADISON HALL, Miller Place, D, Sr. The four-year starter is an integral part of the Panthers' back line and defends the opposing team's top attack. The Manhattan College commit had 45 ground balls and 31 forced turnovers.

MILLER PLACE UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

7 Memorial Drive, Miller Place, NY 11764

Board of Education: Lisa Reitan, *President* • Bryan Makarius, *Vice President* • John Galligan, *Trustee*
Andrea Spaniolas, *Trustee* • Johanna Testa, *Trustee* • Shane Lomascolo, *Student Representative*

Superintendent of Schools: Seth A. Lipshie