



# HERRICKS HERALD

HERRICKS SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

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## Herricks Homegrown

**SPECIAL ISSUE**

We've dedicated this month's issue of the *Herricks Herald* to highlighting a few of the amazing Herricks alumni staff members that help to make our school district great!

# Herricks Homegrown

**H**erricks Homegrown is a regular feature where we highlight members of the Herricks staff who are also alumni of the district! This month we'll be featuring two terrific educators from the elementary school level—Melissa Bergersen and Sara Kamali from Denton Avenue. Additionally, don't forget to keep an eye on our social media channels, where we'll soon be sharing video interviews with our each of the staff members featured here!

## Melissa Bergersen

*Reading Specialist, Denton Avenue*

### **Where did you go after graduating from Herricks?**

*After high school, I went to Hofstra for my undergrad and then I went to Queens for my Masters in literacy. I don't know if there was ever a clearcut decision, I've just always wanted to teach. I used to tutor my sister when we were kids and I just really enjoyed it. So I think it's just been a lifelong feeling.*



### **What brought you back to Herricks, specifically?**

*I think I could tie that back into tutoring my sister. While she never explicitly thanked me, she does admit that she looks back fondly at the time that I spent teaching her. I think we have a lot of kids that do thank us here, and they'll visit and bring us birthday treats and remember to say "hi" to us...but for the kids who might not, I hope they'll at least be able to look back fondly at their time here and can confidently say that this was a good place with good people and that they learned great things. I know that Herricks has that kind of environment because I experienced it as a student, which is why I thought "why not keep that going?"*

### **What does being a member of the Herricks community mean to you?**

*Well, Herricks has always been my home. I lived here—still live here—and I went to school here. I teach here now. I just hope that even the kids who leave the district someday and go live elsewhere can always think of Herricks as their home and as a place where they could be themselves, a place where they were safe, and a place where they loved what they did and learned—just like I did as a student and still do even now.*



## Sara Kamali

*1st Grade Teacher, Denton Avenue*

### **Where did you go after graduating from Herricks?**

*So, I went to Searingtown for elementary school—a lot of my teachers are still there. I went to Herricks Middle School and Herricks High School, then after that I went to Queens College for both undergrad and grad school. I got my undergrad in sociology and history and I went back to grad school for early childhood education.*

### **What brought you back to Herricks, specifically?**

*Working in Herricks was always a dream of mine, since it was a huge part of my upbringing and my education. I connected with and stayed in touch with a lot of the teachers—even ones I never had as a student. Julie Fegan, my second grade teacher, being one of them. So I stayed in touch and I remember calling Herricks constantly as soon as I graduated. I connected with Linda Weiershauser and I remember I would call her every Friday to ask if there were any openings and she'd always tell me to “keep in touch, stay consistent, and be persistent” and, lo and behold, I finally found something part-time in kindergarten. I've been here at Denton ever since.*

### **What does being a member of the Herricks community mean to you?**

*Being a member of the Herricks School District means not only giving back, but also paying it forward. I was lucky enough to grow up in this district and I was super shy. I've changed a lot since then, but I remember being very closed off and having a lot of anxiety about going to school. I still remember how much the teachers and even the principal made a difference for me. The Searingtown principal Mrs. Lindenauer used to come to all of my school plays, even outside of school hours. She made connections with all of us and I remember how much that meant to me, which is why I feel now that paying it forward is so important—especially for kids that don't have that sense of “home.” I always say that our class is like a family, because it really is...the kids spend most of their day in school, so it's so important to me that they feel a sense of belonging.*