



# Saugerties

## Central School District

FALL 2024

### LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Saugerties Families and Community Members,

In January 2024, the Saugerties Board of Education began gathering input from parents, students, staff, and other key members of our school community. This feedback guided our work as we crafted a mission, vision, and set of core values that define our priority areas and action steps for the coming years. Our mission centers on creating equitable and inspiring experiences that promote student and community success, especially in our diverse and changing world. We envision Saugerties as a beacon of educational excellence, where every student can reach their fullest potential. Our core values emphasize a solution-focused mindset filled with integrity, empathy, engagement, equity, empowerment, inclusivity, and collaboration. With these principles guiding us, we have identified four main priorities: Academic Excellence, Family



*Continued on page 5*

### HONORING HEROES: A Veterans Day Tribute at Saugerties Junior High

Prior to Veterans Day, our Junior High School gathered to honor our nation's heroes during a meaningful Veterans Day assembly. Local veterans joined students and staff for a heartfelt celebration, which was kicked off by a delicious breakfast shared by students and members of their families who have served in the military.

The assembly that followed featured patriotic music, performed by members of our talented chorus and band, which filled the auditorium with pride and gratitude. This year, we had the incredible privilege of welcoming two remarkable veterans—Paul Donlon, age 99, and George Habernig, age 105—who both served in World War II.



### Mum Bowl Celebrates Mum Queen Coronation

On October 5, during the annual Mum Bowl football game, Saugerties celebrated a cherished tradition—the crowning of the Mum Queen! Last year's queen, Michele Loebbaka, returned to the campus for the crowning of Jade Arias Sorto as this year's Mum Queen!

Joining Arias Sorto on the Mum Bowl court were Chloe Turner and Grace Hopf, making this moment even more special. Congratulations to Jade, Chloe, and Grace for representing Saugerties with such grace and pride!



NON-PROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
NEWBURGH, NY 12550  
PERMIT #145  
MAN-WSS

Saugerties Central School District  
Call Box A  
Saugerties, NY 12477  
845-247-6500  
www.saugerties.k12.ny.us

TO POSTAL CUSTOMER

#### Board of Education

Jeffrey Riozzi, *President*  
Katie Emerson Hoss, *Vice President*  
William Ball • Christine Bellarosa  
Sakinah Irizarry • Carole Kelder  
Michael Meyer • Timothy Wells  
Meredith Mills, *Student Representative*

Superintendent of Schools  
Dr. Daniel Erceg



Saugerties Central School District

FIND US:

Newsletter produced/designed by Ulster BOCES





## DRIVING HOME KINDNESS: How One Bus Driver's Thoughtfulness Inspires Saugerties Students

In honor of World Kindness Day on November 13, the Saugerties Central School District would like to express its gratitude for the incredible people who work every day to uplift our students. One shining example is First Student school bus driver Andrew Fisco, whose kindness brings warmth and positivity to every ride.



After a long career working for New York State, Fisco joined First Student as a bus driver, and he has become known for his generous spirit.

Recently, Fisco's kindness stood out during a trip with our Varsity and Junior Varsity Volleyball teams. Varsity Coach Ashley Werner shared in a letter to Saugerties Transportation Supervisor Kristin Wilhelm that, from the moment the teams boarded the bus, Andrew's positive attitude made the trip special. When one player realized her iPad was dead, he offered his own charger to keep her connected. Throughout the game, Fisco cheered the girls on from the stands and was there afterward to congratulate them on their win. During a dinner stop, he even offered to buy the athletes' meals. When asked why he wanted to pay for their dinners, Fisco answered, "I was so proud of how well they played."

This is just a glimpse of the care and kindness that Fisco shows every day. Known for handing out holiday candy and always being ready with a smile, he treats the students like family. "These kids are like my kids," he said. "They keep me young."

For Fisco, spreading joy and encouragement isn't just a job—it's a calling to try to bring out the best in others. "Every person has something good inside of them," he explained. "I just try to seek it out by talking to them, asking them how they are doing, and encouraging them to keep working hard at school."

Students, coaches, and even Wilhelm say the same thing—the bus driver's positivity is inspiring. Grade 7 student Torran Latham describes him as "very kind," while Wilhelm says that he makes her job easier just by being there.

We're so grateful to have Fisco as part of our community, reminding us all of the power of kindness and connection. Thank you for making a difference in Saugerties every day!

## Caring Hearts, Even in Retirement



Check out this heartwarming moment from a recent luncheon/general meeting of the Saugerties Schools Retired Employees Association (SSREA)! Our amazing retirees are gathered around a table overflowing with hats, caps, mittens, and gloves, which they are generously donating to Saugerties elementary school students in need.

Even though they've stepped out of the classrooms, these incredible former staff members continue to show their dedication to our students and community. Thank you, SSREA, for keeping the spirit of service alive and for your ongoing support of the Saugerties Central School District!

## Saugerties Leadership Joins Statewide Forum on Transforming New York Graduation Standards

On October 10, members of the Saugerties Leadership team attended the Ulster BOCES Blue Ribbon Commission Ambassador Forum, where they discussed four proposed transformations for New York schools: adopting the New York State Portrait of a Graduate, redefining credits, eliminating diploma assessment requirements, and moving to a single diploma model. This forum was part of an initiative by the Board of Regents, which was launched in 2019 to gather diverse stakeholder input with the aim of rethinking New York's graduation requirements. We're proud of our leaders for their commitment to helping to shape the future of education for our students and community!





## Students Celebrate Día de los Muertos



In Carolyn Muñoz's Junior High World Language class, students got creative by making their own sugar "skulls" using Rice Krispies Treats, sprinkles, and chocolate morsels! These vibrantly colored treats were inspired by the traditional sugar skulls from southern Mexico, which are often used to honor departed souls during el Día de los Muertos, or the Day of the Dead. Through this hands-on activity, students explored how different cultures remember loved ones, gaining a deeper understanding of this unique tradition while crafting their own festive creations.



## Spook-tacular Parade Brings Halloween Smiles to Cahill Elementary

Cahill Elementary School students dressed to the nines and put on a parade to remember! Walking through the hallways, they showcased their amazing costumes to different grades. Smiles and cheers filled the halls as everyone admired the creativity and spirit. It was a fun way for our students to shine and spread Halloween joy!

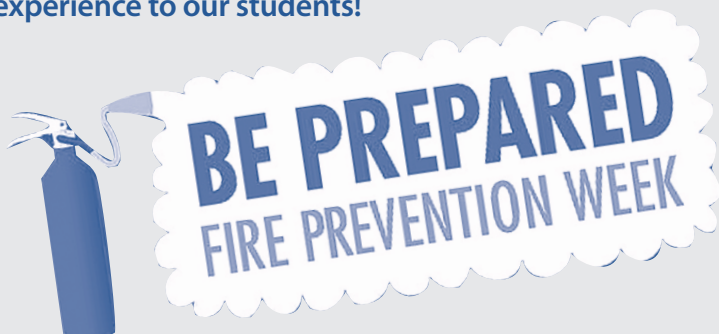


## Students Learn Life-Saving Skills from Local Heroes



In honor of Fire Prevention Week (October 6-12), our Saugerties Elementary Schools got an exciting hands-on lesson in fire safety. Students learned crucial safety tips like how to stop, drop, and roll; watched attentively as firefighters demonstrated their gear; and even got the chance to explore the inside of a fire truck!

A huge thank-you to the incredible fire departments from Glasco, Mt. Marion, Centerville, and the Village of Saugerties Fire Districts for bringing this valuable experience to our students!





# Students Learn to Weave Together Art and Culture

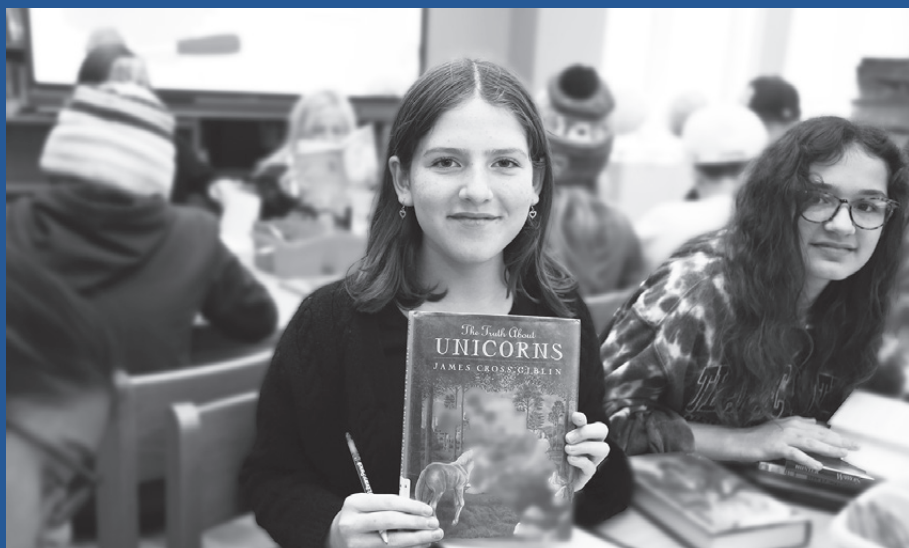
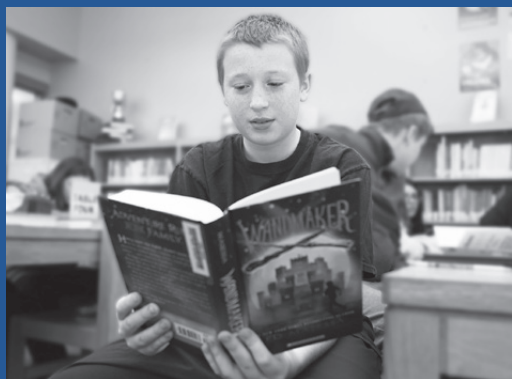
Grade 3 students in Amy Dunaief's Art class at Grant D. Morse Elementary School recently had the amazing opportunity to learn from local weaving artist Halyna Shepko! Not only did they gain hands-on experience in weaving, but they also learned about Shepko's Ukrainian culture.

Students dove into the world of weaving, learning cool terms like warp, weft, and roving, and even got to try their hand at the loom, creating a tree on a tapestry rug! Each student worked on the collaborative project, first by having some students sketch a tree as a cartoon image and then using it as a guide behind the loom. They also learned where wool comes from and how it's spun into all kinds of creations—from clothing to rugs to pouches!



## "BOOK TASTINGS" SPARK READING EXCITEMENT

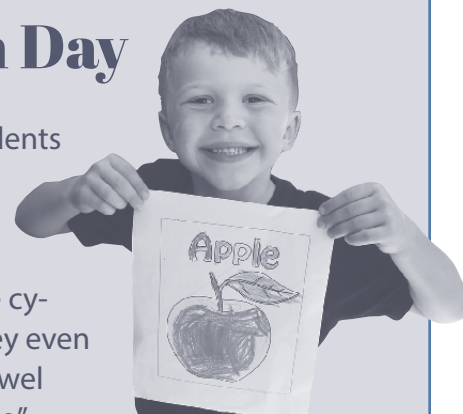
At Cahill Elementary School, Library Media Specialist Autumn Cook has been hosting "Book Tastings" for students! Recently, Grade 6 students explored a variety of books during their library time to find their next favorite read. Each student checked out covers, read summaries, and even sampled the first page to see which books piqued their interest. Then, they moved to new tables to discover even more exciting titles. This creative approach has been a great way to get students excited about reading!



## Apple Exploration Day

Our Kindergarten and Grade 1 students recently got hands-on with all things apples! They counted apples, weighed apples, colored apple pie worksheets, and learned about the life cycle of an apple tree. At one station, they even created their own apple trees using towel tubes, popsicle sticks, and fluffy "apples."

The day also included an apple-themed story and a tasty treat: homemade applesauce! Students left with happy tummies and a bushel of apple-related knowledge!





# A Paws-itive Break for Our Students

**M**t. Marion Learning Center students recently had the chance to enjoy a well-deserved brain break with Bowie Girl, a certified therapy dog! This five-year-old German Shepherd brightened everyone's day, as students enjoyed petting her, brushing her, and even reading stories to her. They also gave a few tasty treats to Bowie Girl, who was very appreciative.

Taking care of ourselves is very important, and moments like these remind us how important it is to "paws," relax, and enjoy a true brain break.



## LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

*Continued from page 1*

and Community Engagement, Professional Culture, and the Sawyer Experience. Each priority has a specific goal, including individualized academic challenges for every student, enhancing community connections, fostering a strong professional culture among staff, and creating a welcoming environment for students to thrive.

The District is actively working to fill key staff vacancies in the Business Office, monitors, and a Human Resource Director, though the hiring process has been slow. These delays are a result of the limited applicant pool, civil service canvassing, and the need to find candidates who fully align with our District's mission and vision. We appreciate the community's patience as we work to build a team that can effectively support our students.

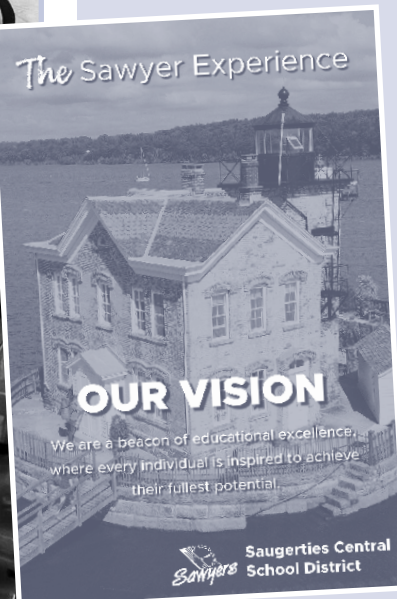
Lastly, as we approach next year's

Budget, I would like to assure you that we remain focused on responsibly allocating resources to support the District's mission and priorities. Our aim is to ensure financial stability while providing the highest quality educational experience for every student. We encourage everyone to be engaged in the

budgeting process again this spring.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement as we work together for the success of all students in Saugerties.

Sincerely,  
Daniel M. Erceg, Ed.D.





## SIX WORDS, ONE COMMUNITY: Stories of Saugerties

At the end of the 2023-2024 school year, we invited our incredible Saugerties Central School District community—teachers, students, parents, and neighbors—to express how they feel about our District using just six words. Nearly 100 inspiring stories poured in, each capturing unique experiences and emotions tied to Saugerties.

From heartfelt reflections like “Thirty-three years went way too fast!” to thoughtful memories like “Never-ending learning, growing, changing, improving, together,” these stories highlighted the strength, spirit, and connections shared by everyone who calls Saugerties home.

At the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year, administrators selected six standout stories from various stakeholders to highlight. These stories reflect the diverse experiences and feelings about our school community. The District is sharing these meaningful six-word stories and will have them available on the website. Each person’s words are part of the unique communal voice that makes up “The Sawyer Experience!”

### OCTOBER - Karen Krzywonos - Secretary

Education! Empowerment! Selflessness! Sawyer Strong Always!

### NOVEMBER - Charly Algan - Student

I am challenged and supported here!

### DECEMBER - Minerva Homan - Parent/Taxpayer

Four daughters graduated Saugerties, all successful!

The other three winners will be announced in the new year.



Minerva Homan



Karen Krzywonos



Charly Algan

## JUNIOR HIGH SCIENCE CLUB TAKES FLIGHT

Students in our Junior High Science Club recently put their science skills to the test! Students designed and built parachutes using different materials, aiming to land a clothespin closest to a bull’s-eye target. The real challenge came when they dropped their creations from the second floor in the stairwell. It was an exciting experiment, which allowed our students to gain firsthand knowledge about aerodynamics and engineering!



## LOOKING AHEAD

**November 27 - November 29**

Schools Closed for  
Thanksgiving Holiday

**December 3**

Junior/Senior High Winter Band  
Concert 7 PM

**December 5**

Cahill Winter Concert 7 PM

**December 6**

Star Gazing Party 5 PM to 8 PM

**December 9**

GDM Winter Concert 7 PM

**December 10**

Board of Education Meeting  
at Cahill Elementary School 6:30 PM

**December 11**

Riccardi Winter Concert 7 PM

**December 17**

High School Chorale Concert 7 PM

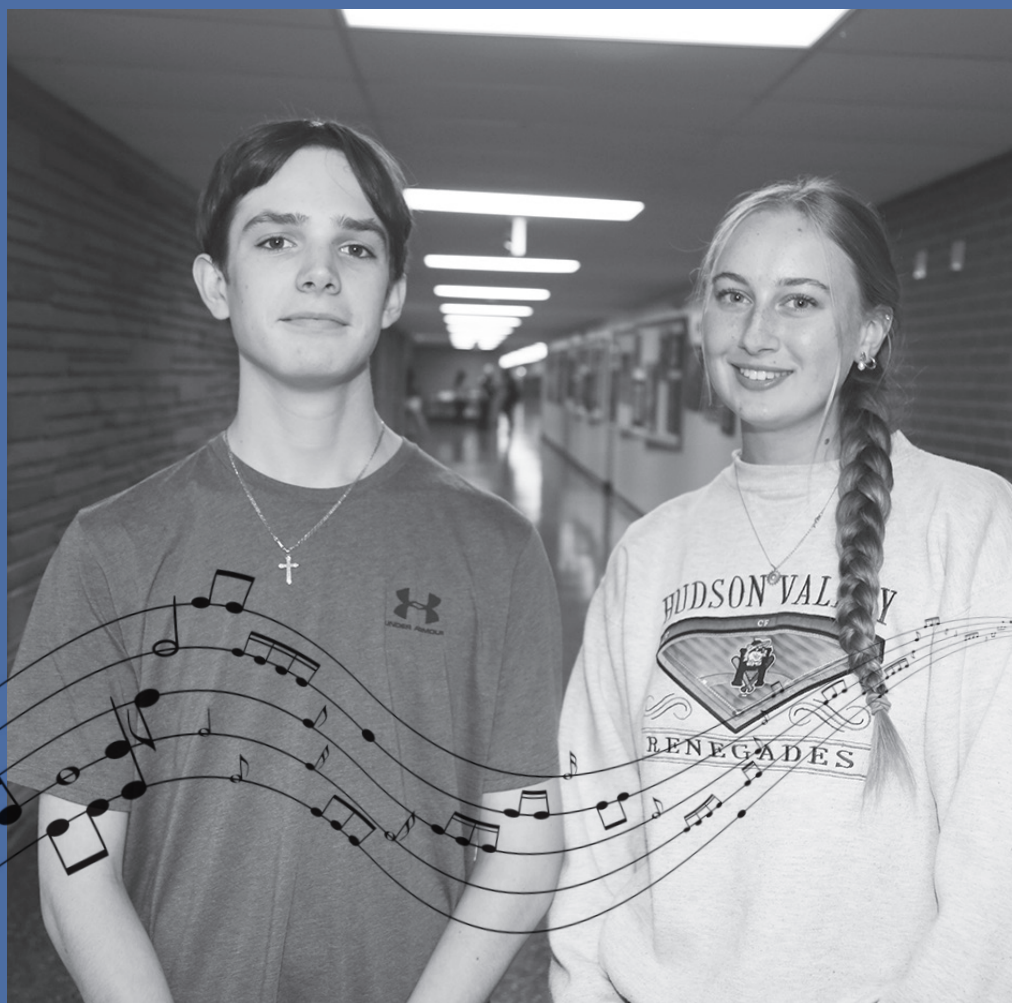


## EXCITING NEWS FROM THE SAUGERTIES HIGH SCHOOL MUSIC DEPARTMENT

We're happy to share the news that two of our talented seniors, James McTague and Chloe Turner, have been selected to participate in the prestigious 2024 New York State Schools Music Association (NYSSMA) All-State Winter Conference this December!

After wowing the judges during their solo festival auditions last spring, McTague and Turner earned this incredible honor. They will be joining just 600 students from across New York State who will be performing in All-State groups, representing five musical categories: band, chorus, orchestra, instrumental, and vocal jazz.

McTague was selected for Mixed Chorus Bass 2, and Turner was selected for Mixed Chorus Soprano 1.



## Saugerties senior Chloe Turner shares her experience attending NYSSMA's Solo Festival and being selected to sing at All-States:

Hi, I'm Chloe Turner, and I was selected as an All-State qualifier.

On May 11, 2024, I attended the NYSSMA Solo Festival at The Mount Academy in Esopus for the first time. In early January, my voice teacher, Mr. Zelamsky, selected a beautiful piece called "Sure on This Shining Night" as my solo. It is an emotional, lyrical song, typically for a soprano range. The song did not come easy; I worked on it for a majority of my voice classes from January until mid-May. At NYSSMA, I performed my song for a judge, along with a level 6 sight reading. I felt very confident in my solo, and it was no surprise when I walked out of the school with a performance grade of a 99 out of 100.



Over the summer I got the news that I was selected to attend NYSSMA All-State as a soprano 1 in the Mixed Choir. All-State is a huge honor, as only about 600 students are chosen from all over the State to participate in either the band or choir. Although I was confident in my NYSSMA solo, I was completely shocked when I received an acceptance letter. I am so grateful to have been given this experience and represent the Saugerties Music Department.

Over the last two years, my voice has grown tremendously, and I have learned the true power of my voice. I started off knowing nothing about music, but because of Mrs. MacDougall and Mr. Zelamsky I can read and sing music with ease. The Saugerties Music Department has taught me everything I know and has provided me with so many incredible opportunities as a singer. Music has made me who I am today, all thanks to the love and support of my music community.

**Student Voice**

**Chloe Turner**

**GRADE 12**

Girls Varsity Tennis, Captain  
Girls Varsity Lacrosse  
National Honor Society  
Tri-M Honor Society, Treasurer  
Drama Club, Social Director  
Key Club





## MUM BOWL RECAP: Sawyers Show Heart!

**T**he Saugerties Varsity Football team put up an incredible fight during the October 5 Homecoming Mum Bowl against the Beacon Bulldogs! Though the Sawyers didn't take home the win, they left it all on the field with an amazing effort from start to finish. The final score was 21-14, Beacon.

We're so proud of our Sawyers for their determination, teamwork, and sportsmanship. Keep your heads high, Sawyers! You've made your community proud.



## Saugerties Sophomore Ty Monroe Claims MHAL Golf Championship with Record Performance

**S**augerties High School sophomore Ty Monroe just made the Sawyer Nation proud by winning the Mid-Hudson Athletic League (MHAL) Fall Golf Individual Championship! Monroe, who shot an incredible 1-under-par 70 at the Apple Greens Golf Course in Highland, was the only golfer to go under par on the challenging 18-hole, par-71 course.

Monroe outplayed talented competitors, finishing 3 strokes ahead of the next-closest competitor! His top finish also earns him a spot in the Section 9 Championship tournament next spring.

Monroe is only the fourth Sawyer golfer to win the MHAL crown in school history.



## An Amazing Ride to Sectionals

**C**ongratulations to our Varsity Volleyball team on an incredible season! The journey to Sectionals was full of determination, teamwork, and unforgettable moments. Although they faced a tough opponent in Beacon High School and came up short, our players showed true grit and sportsmanship every step of the way. Each match brought the community together, as the fans cheered louder with each victory. The dedication of our team and coaches made this season one to remember, and we couldn't be prouder of all they accomplished.

