

DECEMBER 3, 2024



SOMERS CENTRAL
SCHOOL DISTRICT
NEWS FOR FAMILIES

TUSKER NATION

Football Tuskers Headed for Syracuse, Track's Duzynski Reaches Championship



The Somers High School football team is headed for the state championship game in Syracuse on Friday after shutting down Cornwall 35-0 in the semifinals.

The win capped an undefeated march to Syracuse that included leaving behind Averill Park in the quarterfinals and Rye in the sectional championship.

Head coach Anthony DeMatteo said the team's strength is in the athletes' drive to play well for each other.

"When you do something as intensely and as often as we do, you start to form a bond that's very special," DeMatteo said.

Their championship game will be a rematch with the Whitesboro Warriors, whom Somers defeated last year. The game begins at 6 p.m. Friday at the JMA Dome in Syracuse.

Quarterback and team captain Miguel Iglesias said the Tuskers are excited for the game, but aware of the challenge they face.

"We know that they're a good team also coming into this game," he said. "And they're going to want revenge from last year, so we're going to have to work a little harder."

[Watch the game on the NFHS Network here.](#)

In other sports highlights, Somers High School junior Julia Duzynski competed in the Class B New York State Public High School Athletics Association Cross Country Championship race at Queensbury High School on Nov. 16. She finished 15th.

Congratulations are in order for the nine student athletes in the Somers High School class of 2025 who committed to colleges and universities on Signing Day, Nov. 20.

"We are so proud of these students," said Marc Hattem, Director of Athletics, Health and Physical Education. "This achievement speaks to their resiliency and commitment along their athletic journey since starting here in Somers in elementary school. Watching them advance and be offered the chance to play at a such a high level is an honor that makes me very proud."

The students are:

- **Julia Arbelaez** (girls soccer): Syracuse University
- **Haylie Donovan** (girls track): Southern Methodist University
- **Andrew Kapica** (baseball): Fordham University
- **Mason Kelly** (boys lacrosse): Brown University
- **Miguel Iglesias** (boys lacrosse): University of Notre Dame
- **Sydney Ingraham** (girls lacrosse): University of Notre Dame
- **McKenna Mullins** (gymnastics): College of William & Mary
- **Tiana Righetti** (girls soccer): University of Connecticut
- **Julia Schmidberger** (girls soccer): College of Staten Island (Division 2)





The Signing Day athletes, from left: Andrew Kapica, Miguel Iglesias, Mason Kelly, Haylie Donovan, Sydney Ingraham, Tiana Righetti, McKenna Mullins, Julia Schmidberger, and Julia Arbelaez.

Three SHS Juniors Named National STEM Finalists



From left, Somers High School juniors and National STEM finalists Caroline DiMella, Isabella Wissa, and Anya Khurana.

Three Somers High School juniors – Caroline DiMella, Anya Khurana, and Isabella Wissa – have been named finalists in the National STEM Festival competition with their research into ADHD, cancer, and infantile spasms (IS).

This is Somers' first year in the competition, which was started last year by the education streaming service EXPLR, and which invites participants from across U.S. states and territories. The Somers finalists are among 12 chosen from New York State.

"This is a huge accomplishment for Caroline, Anya, and Isabella, and for Somers High School!" said

science research teacher William Maelia. “These juniors worked very hard over the summer to complete their research projects. They will be entering numerous other competitions throughout the year. Hopefully this achievement is a sign of many future successes.”

The finalists will submit videos for the next round. On Dec. 18, up to 150 champions will be named, including three or four from New York State. They will be invited to the National STEM Festival in Washington D.C. in March, where they will present their projects to corporate executives, government officials, and the media, while also benefiting from mentoring and networking opportunities.

For her research, DiMella analyzed data, including ADHD symptom assessments, from the ongoing national Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) Study. She discovered “the importance of including children’s self-reported data in ADHD assessments, as it may provide a more accurate representation of their developmental stage and associated symptoms.”

She worked with a mentor, a researcher at Columbia University, who guided her in using statistical software such as R Studio to analyze the data.

“I dedicated several months to coding, performing statistical tests, and refining my findings,” DiMella said.

Khurana experimented with a metabolite, referred to as Metabolite Z for proprietary purposes, to show that it “significantly induces dormancy in metastatic uveal melanoma cells. This means that treatment with Metabolite Z has the potential to stop the cancer cells from growing, increasing survival rates for this highly lethal disease.”

She conducted her research throughout the summer at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx.

“That was my first time with real lab exposure, and I learned so much about scientific methods, laboratory procedures, and what it means to be part of a lab team!” Khurana said.

Wissa conducted an experiment to better understand infantile spasms (IS), which can cause long-term debilitating effects.

“I was heartbroken to not only learn about infants who live with it, but also about their parents who support their infants through frightening spasms.”

Wissa said she also greatly benefited from her summer spent on laboratory work at New York Medical College in Valhalla. She plans to pursue a pre-med track in high school with the ultimate goal of becoming a neurologist, she said, noting, “I am passionate about the brain and how it works.”

Superintendent Search is on Track For March 2025 Decision

Applications are coming in for the next Superintendent to lead the Somers Central School District.

Recruitment letters also have been sent, the district has reached out to prospective candidates, and School Leadership, the district’s search firm, has begun screening potential candidates to meet with the

What We're Looking For:

The following are the qualities sought in the next Somers Central School District Superintendent. They were adopted by the Board of Education on Oct. 30 after extensive community input:

Board of Education.

"We're still on target to conduct our interviews as a Board in January," Board of Education President Amanda Kandel said at the Nov. 26 meeting.

The Board plans to select a new permanent Superintendent on March 11, 2025.

A job advertisement placed Nov. 1 calls for applications from education administrators who can lead the district of 2,600 students and four schools.

"The Board of Education is seeking a leader who can build upon the district's many accomplishments and take it to its next level of excellence," the advertisement reads.

Interim Superintendent Harry LeFevre has run the schools since former Superintendent Dr. Raymond Blanch left for another district last summer.

The Board seeks a top educator who can advance the district's commitment to developing the whole child in three fundamental areas:

- 21st century knowledge and skills
- Social, emotional, and physical wellness
- Global citizenship

To formulate criteria for the next top educator, the Board engaged 81 community members in focus groups and town hall meetings, plus 449 participants in a survey.

On Oct. 30, based on the input, the Board adopted a list of qualities sought in the next superintendent; a diplomatic, visionary, thoughtful, approachable, courageous, and trustworthy leader. (See sidebar.)

The district will accept applications via www.leadschools.us through Jan. 15, 2025.

- A diplomatic, centered leader who excels at strengthening and unifying relationships and rebuilding trust across the district and community through ongoing clear, proactive, and transparent communication and engagement that encourages and invites participation.
- A savvy, visionary leader with past success at establishing collaborative planning to develop and implement financial strategies necessary to ensure that a complex system will serve its stakeholders - short and long-term.
- A thoughtful, measured thinker who can lead innovative and future-oriented approaches to prepare students for school success and their post-secondary experiences while ensuring equitable, inclusive access for all student groups.
- An approachable educational leader who models kindness and accessibility and is motivated to advocate for the well-being of students and the professional community to foster a supportive learning environment.
- A courageous, trustworthy leader who is mindful of the broad needs of the community, and through good governance, collaboration, and partnership with school leadership teams, will lead the district thoughtfully and wisely into the future.

Learn more about the [superintendent search page](#) on our website.

Seen Around Somers



Turf is rolling out on the renovated baseball field, and drainage and site work continue at the softball field. Both are on track for Dec. 31 completion, if the weather complies. The improvements follow the opening of six new tennis courts first used on Oct. 21.

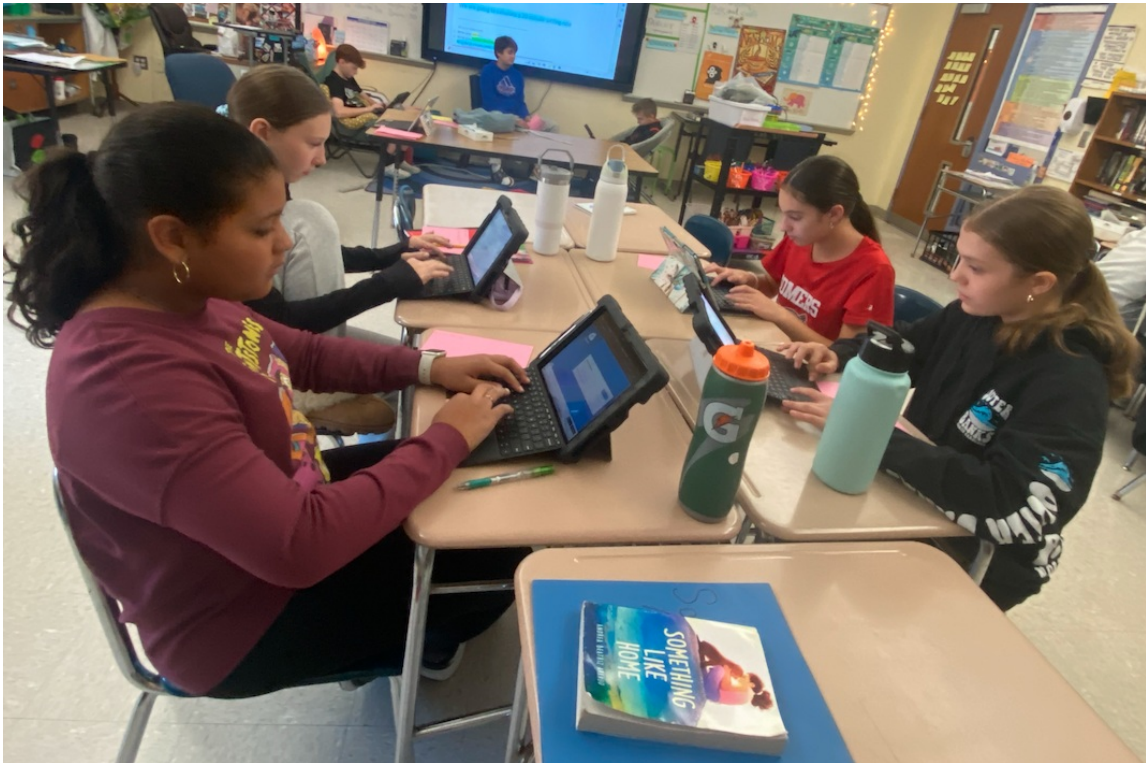


The Somers Middle School Tusker Experience Class, working with the Service Club, made 25 Thanksgiving baskets for local families in need, to be distributed by St. Luke's Parish. The International Baccalaureate learner profile attribute of November was caring.



Somers Intermediate School third graders visited the Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk as an extension of "The Sea" module in the new Wit and Wisdom Language Arts program.

Budding Authors Pen Stories In Monthlong Novel-Writing Challenge



Eighth-grade authors at work on their novels in Kirstin Reynolds' class.

Eighth-grade students at Somers Middle School (SMS) spent last month crafting their own novels for National Novel Writing Month, a 30-day challenge that comes each November. Intended to immerse them in writing, the project has inspired stories about ghosts, football players, a dystopian society and more.

Elizabeth Spano, whose novel *Decisions in the Dark* is about a girl who awakens from a coma, said the writing can be intimidating – until you dive into it.

"I start writing and I get ideas and it gets easier," she said. "It gets better."

Often called NaNoWriMo the project engages hundreds of thousands of writers around the world.

"This experience provides students the opportunity to hone their writing skills while creating authentic stories that they want to tell," said SMS teacher Kirstin Reynolds, who leads the project with teacher Tricia Baldes.

Those stories include *Forever Sixteen* by Emily Martin, about a ghost and her best friend solving a mystery; Casey Johns's story about a girl looking for her missing mother; and Adrian Sinanaj's novel about a football player who hits a rough patch.

Students began by setting goals whether it was 5,000 words, 10,000 words or more. They then strove to write for 500 minutes, combining time spent writing in class and at home. They will be graded not on their word count but on how well they applied skills taught along the way, such as "showing versus telling," verb usage and figurative language.

Baldes said that New York State education standards call for narrative writing. "We often remind students that the skills they are learning here should be applied as they write elsewhere," she said.

Leo Mundis, writing the dystopian novel *The Ghost of the Revolution*, saw the project's benefits for students.

"It stimulates them more than just reading or studying other books," he said.

Woods Behind Somers Intermediate School Become Outdoor Classroom



Exploring the trails behind Somers Intermediate School.

The trails behind Somers Intermediate School aren't just for walking in nature;

they're also an outdoor educational space.

"It's great to get students out of the school and into nature for a few minutes," Mrs. Jaime Pyschlak said.

The weather was unseasonably warm as the students began their hiking unit in physical education classes recently. Before trekking out, students made sure they had the right equipment: sneakers and a trail map. (Sneakers were available for borrowing if needed.)

"We're hiking, but it's more than hiking. We're experiencing nature," said Ava I. "It feels good to be out in nature."

Mr. Thomas Albano made sure that every group of students had a map and then reiterated how to read it. That meant following the colored lines marking the trail routes, knowing which trails they planned to take, and understanding how to orient the map based on where they were standing in relation to a landmark.

Students took to the trails eagerly, with Mr. Albano leading the way and Mrs. Pyschlak following at the end. Along the way, students learned to respect nature.

"If you drop something you should pick it up and not leave it there," Elle P. said. "If you find something, you should leave it there and not take it with you."

"If you find an old ruin, you can't pick up a souvenir," added Ava. "You leave it there and just experience it. You can take pictures, but not take it."

Multiple times, Mr. Albano stopped to show students how to read their map and determine their location by, for instance, looking for and recognizing trail markers painted on trees. The hikes take about 15 minutes round trip. Once students make it back to school, they return to the gym with time to stretch before class ends.

Primrose Students Interview for Positions at the Wee Deliver Post Office



Interim Superintendent Harry LeFevre interviews a job candidate for the Wee Deliver Postal Service team.

A new school year brings a new batch of “Wee Deliver” student postal workers ready to sort and carry mail at Primrose Elementary School.

“The students are very interested in participating in this,” said Interim Superintendent Harry LeFevre.

Second graders were full of smiles and nerves as they walked into the cafeteria for their opportunity to interview for the Wee Deliver Postal Service. Students interview for various positions, including sorter, carrier, clerk, and Postmaster.

“All students have wanted to be a carrier or a sorter,” LeFevre added. “They can explain what each of the positions requires.”

Students filled out job application forms, answering questions such as their name and address, what job they would like to do, and why they should be chosen for the position. They brought those applications with them to their interviews for review.

“I’m very excited,” Olivia M. said. “I’m mostly excited to be a carrier.”

Administrators and staff eagerly made time in their schedules to interview the students, happy to be a part of this long-standing tradition. Interviewees were asked about their desire to be a part of the team and how they would handle certain situations, such as whether they should read the mail while sorting it or what they would do if a friend asked to read someone else’s mail.

“I like carrying mail to the post office,” Mackenzie K. said.

All interested students were accepted onto the Wee Deliver postal team. At a special ceremony, all new postal workers took an oath led by Officer Brian Pavletich, the School Resource Officer. Students are split into small groups while they work in the post office for two-week sessions. During their sessions, each student will have a chance to perform each job.



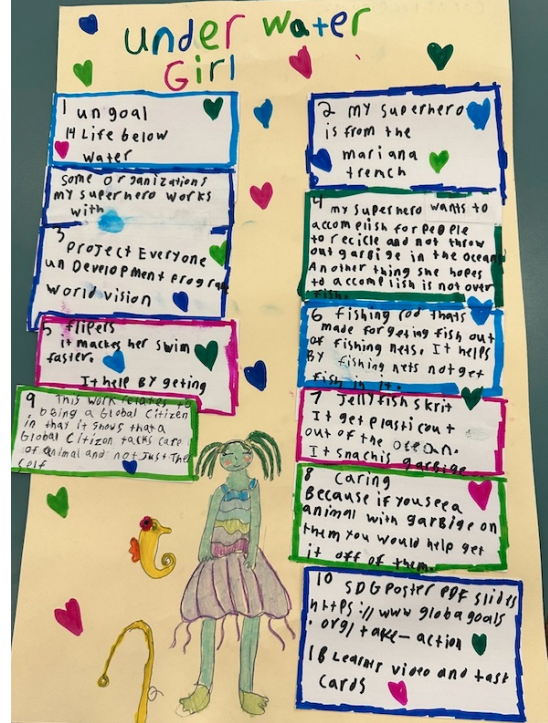
Where can you find a fun time in December? The Somers High School Drama Club has a Clue.

Yes, the troupe will stage the murder mystery-comedy Clue on Dec. 13 at 7 p.m. and Dec. 14 at 1 p.m. and 7 p.m. in the auditorium of Somers High School, 120 Primrose St., Lincoln Dale. Come find out whodunit – Colonel Mustard? Miss Scarlet? Or one of the other familiar characters from the classic board game?

The only thing that's certain is a good time.
Buy tickets here: <https://omella.com/tuqtv>

Also enjoy these other winter events:

- Somers Middle School Winter Concert, Dec. 12, 6:30 p.m.
- Somers Intermediate School Winter Concert, Dec. 18, 7 p.m.
- Somers High School Winter Concert, Dec. 19, 7 p.m.



Clarification

The superhero "Under Water Girl" (above) was created by Somers Middle School sixth grader Coral Rodriguez for a project inventing superheroes to help achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This information was omitted from the Nov. 12 Tusker Nation.



There is a lot happening at the high school. The Freshman class is selling elephant ornaments and the Junior class is having a popcorn fundraiser. Additionally, the **SHS PTA** will host a staff appreciation luncheon for faculty later this month.

- The **SMS PTA** approved two grants last month: two 3D printers for the Technology Department and two new skeletons for the Science Department. We are thrilled to be able to help teachers enhance learning opportunities.
- The **SIS PTA** hosted a Kindness Adventure assembly, offered by NED (back by popular demand!) Students were encouraged to show kindness and embrace differences, and proceeds from the sale of artisan-made Kenyan treasures went to the Kenyan Clean Water Project.
- **Primrose PTA** welcomed Beth and Scott and their Golden Rule Show. Students explored important topics such as respect, sharing, self-esteem and anti-bullying.

· **SEPTA** worked with the SIS PTA to provide the year's first Recess Refresh. Students practiced conversation skills, and chalk art was a big hit.

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